TRIED IN THE FURNACE

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FOREWORD

What do we know about Elder Lambert? We know that he lived from 1906-1980 and died at age 70 .

Lambert was a respected figure within the Primitive Baptist tradition, particularly associated with the Hopewell Primitive Baptist Church in Texas. He served as a pastor there and contributed significantly to the church's ministry. hopewellprimitivebaptist.org+1hopewellprimitivebaptist.org+1

Lambert authored the book *Tried in the Furnace*, which reflects his theological insights and experiences. This work has been influential within Primitive Baptist circles and is available in both English and Russian editions. hopewellprimitivebaptist.org+1hopewellprimitivebaptist.org+1hopewellprimitivebaptist.org

Beyond his pastoral duties, Elder Lambert also played a role in religious publishing. He served as an associate editor for *Signs of the Times*, a longstanding Primitive Baptist periodical established in 1832. His contributions to this publication helped disseminate Old School Baptist teachings and perspectives. hopewellprimitivebaptist.org+2Ground Zero Books, Ltd.+2Ground Zero Books, Ltd.+2

While detailed biographical information on Elder Lambert is limited, his writings and editorial work continue to be valued resources within the Primitive Baptist community.

Guillermo Santamaria

PREFACE

Tried in the Furnace is a series of articles written from time to time on different phases of the truth. The reader will find the truth arrayed against the arguments and imaginations of the natural finite mind. The case: truth versus error, is tried in the court – furnace of affliction – before Jehovah, the Judge. The reader cannot understand the arguments in this case unless he has been in this court. The writer is persuaded that the readers who have their dwelling-place in the Furnace of Affliction will read and comprehend the briefs on the different phases of this Trial. If the reader has been on trial and weighed in the Balances of Justice, and found wanting, he will read these briefs and be comforted and encouraged. It is hoped they will prove to be stimulating, and cause heart-searching and soul-stirring meditations. Read these opinions and try them by comparison and contrast with your experience, your faith, and the Bib1e. Of course, you will cast them aside if they do not coincide and agree. These decisions are reached on the basis of the law or principle stated in 1 Corinthians 2:14, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” All arguments of the natural man and false opinions must fall into the category of foolishness and error, and the Truth brought to light in these trials in order that the reader be edified. Compare these opinions with the Bible – not man-written codes of denominationalism. Do not

censure the entire book because you run across expressions with which you do not agree. The reader may believe exactly as the writer yet disagree with some expressions because of different conception of meaning of terms. Different conceptions of meaning of terms make some expressions "hard to be understood." Many hours in deep meditation and prayer have been devoted to the preparation of this manuscript. The writer has been convinced of the great importance in proper choice of words and expressions in order to properly state his views. The best words are poor vehicles to convey thoughts unless accompanied by the Spirit. The writer has read and re-read this manuscript before it goes to press. He heartily endorses it as expressing his sincere belief and conscientious convictions. The reader who has been long in the Furnace of Affliction may disagree with applications made on some scriptures. The writer is aware of the fact that many true and experimental phases of Scriptures used in this book have not been more than hinted at. Scriptural references may have been used that would be considered "irrelevant and immaterial testimony." Lack of Spiritual education in the College of Tribulations located in the Furnace of Afflictions may have emboldened the writer to give scriptural references that have no bearing on the case. However, the writer marvels that he is in strict agreement with his early writings. He is made to cry out while reading them, "Surely God has directed his mind and pen." The reader cannot receive the expressions of grace, mercy, love, and truth contained herein unless he has been brought before the Great Judge and experienced the intercedings by the wonderful Counselor, Jesus. This wonderful Counselor is seemingly absent in the first part of the trial. You hear the Judge as He begins to read the verdict sentencing you to death. As in Job's case, you receive a surprise when there appears one having authority during the climax of the trial. Yes, as the trial progressed, your basis for hope was blasted.

Suddenly you were inspired with a new hope when you heard this Counselor plead in your behalf. Your heart was permeated with the sublime atmosphere of Love that even filled the court. The frown of the Judge was transformed into a loving smile. You hear the peculiar plea that justice has been fully satisfied – the penalty fully paid. This was done by your great Friend for you! Was it because of your love for Him? No! No! No! It was because He loved you even when you were dead in trespasses and sin –even when you were as the children of wrath greedily indulging in sin with no thought of the consequences. If you have heard the Judge change your sentence from death unto Life Eternal; if you have heard Him say to you, "I will be merciful to your unrighteousness, and your sins and iniquities I will remember no more" –you will rejoice with the writer in the expressions of love, mercy and grace found in this book. The writer is fully aware of the fact that all true opinions rendered in these meditations are the result of the gracious gifts of God. He is just as fully conscious of the fact that all erroneous theories advanced and mistakes made are because of his ignorance and inability to discern between the Spirit and natural reasoning. The reader is asked to accredit all truths to God and charge all untruths to the writer. These peculiar truths learned in the Furnace of Affliction are dedicated to a peculiar people who "worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." This book is dedicated to those who realize what it means to feel to be "chief of sinners," and "less than the least of all saints." It is dedicated to those who feel unable to do anything for God but realize He must do all for them, if they are to be saved from their sins and enjoy Eternal Life. It is dedicated to those who are "Faithful in Christ Jesus" –not faithful in themselves. May God grant you grace to read it. May He consecrate it to your comfort and edification to the extent that it pleases Him, is the prayer of the writer.

INTRODUCTION

Those who are familiar with the various trials and tribulations of the children of God, as well as their joys and consolations, need no introduction to the writings of one who recounts the things he has learned in the Furnace of Affliction, for they are close kinsmen. They know that the most important things of their lives, are the experimental evidences of the grace and mercy of God toward them. For it is in these things –these teachings of the Spirit, that they are called out of the darkness that is in their natures, into the marvelous light of the Son of God; this being the only way that individual election of grace is manifested in them. For, while they are known and loved of the Father, they are ignorant of it until the time of revelation. It is in the relating of these evidences that one is "giving the reason of the hope that lies within him"; and he who speaks or writes of these things lays no claim that it is he himself who has "accepted Christ," but rather rejoices in the evidences that he is accepted of Christ. Consequently his every thought and desire is to render all praise and honor unto the One who has called him out; for he knows that if all has not been done for him, then nothing is done. We trust that the readers of Tried in the Furnace can witness with Elder Lambert in the afflictions of the gospel; and can journey, as a companion with him, in the familiar paths of those who "look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." At the same time, it is well to remember that, though some may seem to have brighter, or more conclusive evidences than others, each one who is taught of the Lord learns the same things; and that his own hope is as his own anchor to his soul, both sure and steadfast. May these writings, which are learned while being

Tried in the Furnace, be comforting to all who read; as they give all praise, honor and glory to God who is the Author of all truth.

(Elder) John D. Wood

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. He so minutely numbered the generations, set the bounds of their habitations and destined their paths, companions and maneuvers that I, Elbert Jefferson Lambert, should make my natural appearance on September 28, 1906, as the firstborn son of Charles B. and Ida Burchfield Lambert near Amity, Arkansas. I am the oldest of four children born to that union. My grandfather, father and I were born within one half mile of each other. I came up the "hard" way. My father was physically weak, suffered much, and met many hardships trying to "eke out a living" on a little rocky farm in Clark County, Arkansas. He was very zealous, but because of physical handicaps, was unable to realize his ambitions. I received my early education at Elm School and Amity High School. It became necessary that I stop my pursuit for a higher education in order to help support our family. Therefore, I acquired a teaching license and began teaching school in my sixteenth year. I taught my first school at Dobyville, near Okoloma, Arkansas in 1922-23. I taught at Dobyville, Hickory Grove, Lenox, Alpine, Elm and Cedar Bluff, all in Clark County, Arkansas, for the next few years. I was politically inclined and made every effort possible to become acquainted with all the people of that county. When I was about seventeen years of age, I became a member of the Shiloh Church of Christ (Kelly division of Missionary Baptists)

and began teaching Sunday School classes. I can well remember my first "testimony" given in a "testimonial meeting" at Shiloh Church. I quoted John 3:16 and explained it to the best of my ability. The brethren began at once to solicit me to enter the ministry. As a result of my attempts in speaking upon religious subjects, I was ordained to the work of ministry by order of Shiloh church while yet in my "teens." I pursued the vocations of preaching, teaching, and farming several years. All this afforded me opportunity to give vent to my great zeal and high ambitions. I was very conscientious in everything I attempted. Continuous study and strenuous activities in early life had its lasting effect upon my nervous system. On November 17, 1928, I was married to Myrtle Hancock, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Hancock, granddaughter of the late Elder J.H. Langston, of Alpine, Arkansas. She gave birth to our only son, Charles Thomas, on April 6, 1930. She was immediately possessed of pneumonia and departed this life May 3, 1930. I adored her so greatly that the shock of losing my companion drove me to the point of insanity. The year 1930 was an epochal year in my life. All earthly possessions were taken from me and debts accumulated. My health was impaired for life and my ambitions thwarted. Confidence in myself was destroyed and I was forced to give up teaching. Three cars were wrecked and I was made to "look up to see the bottom." Little did I know that behind a frowning providence was the smile of a gracious God! In that same year (1930) a son was born, Jesus appeared as my Savior, and I was added to Cedar Hill Primitive Baptist Church of Christ near Amity, Arkansas. I was baptized by Elder A. D. Wall and began to be exercised as a minister of God's grace in the same year. Four years were spent wholly in the college of tribulations located In the Furnace of Affliction. The relief I experienced during this time was during the fleeting moments in communion with God and my brethren. I could never adjust myself to fit in the home of

my father and mother who were keeping my Tried In The Furnace 8 son. I could not feel at home anywhere and felt this would always be the case. I did not think I would ever marry again because I felt unable to assume the responsibility as the head of a family and that I would never be able to love anyone else enough to engage her companionship for life. I was mistaken in this idea. I met and married Dessie Mae Williams, daughter of Leander and Mary E. Williams of Dalark, Arkansas, in the year 1934. The wedding was solemnized by Elder John T. Everett, November 18, 1934. This gave me a new lease on life. The Lord blessed us with mutual love to the extent that she was and is a real, true companion to me. I was ordained to the officeship of elder by order of Cedar Hill Church, while the South Arkansas Primitive Baptist Association was in session with Whitewater Church, near Fordyce, Arkansas, third Saturday in September, 1934. We lived at Dalark, Arkansas for some time and I assisted in serving churches in that vicinity for several years. New Hope Church of Near Hope, Arkansas, was the first church I attempted to serve as pastor without assistance of other brethren. We have had our place of residence at Dalark, Camden, Cullendale, Hampton, Tinsman, and Calion, Arkansas as well as Lillie, Louisiana before moving to Winnsboro, Texas in 1949. I re-entered the teaching profession during the period of World War II when there was a shortage of teachers and took the responsibility of principal, Tinsman High School, Tinsman, Arkansas and taught in the high school there four years. With exception of this I have devoted my time to serving churches and visiting the brethren in the different sections of the country from 1934 until the present time (1955). I have visited churches in the states of Arkansas, Alabama, California, Delaware, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Tennessee, Virginia and Washington as well as in the

province of Ontario, Canada. I am now attempting to serve four churches as pastor; Hopewell and Good Hope Churches near Winnsboro, Texas; Paran near Hawkins, Texas; and Bethel near El Dorado, Arkansas. This autobiographical sketch was hurriedly written in order that the reader may be better acquainted with the author before reading this book. The nature of the next few articles is autobiographical. I hope to be able to write a story of my life to be published in later writings. Elder E. J. Lambert Signs of the Times, Vol. 161, No.2. Tried In The Furnace 9 EXPERIENCE January, 1949 "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us." – 1 John 1:3 ON THIS BEGINNING of a new year we are mindful to meditate upon the things which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled out of the word of life. We have a desire to review the Lord's dealings with us, giving diligence to make our calling and election sure. We are writing this epistle to the household of faith beseeching you to note the way-marks along the path we have traveled. If it so be that you recognize the markers along the way as being the path you have traveled, then you have fellowship with us; if they be strange to you, then you can class us as a stranger to the household of faith. It has been so long since we have written you that we feel some kind of explanation would be appropriate. A few months ago we were employed by a concern that required our services from eleven to seventeen hours a day for six to seven days each week. We were content to pursue this with the vain thought that at an opportune time we could again take up our communion with brethren and meditations upon the Scriptures. We held this position three months and upon its termination tried fervently for one month to renew our relationship with brethren and lay hold on the Spirit of God. It pleased God to cut us off and to make us know that our trials were in vain.

When we had given up all hope and were persuaded that we had been a deceiver and that our lot was with the wicked, the Lord graciously came to our rescue, renewing our interest and relationship with Him and our brethren. Prior to this wonderful renewing of the Spirit we tried many times to pray, meditate, write and sing, but it was so cold and formal that it made us shudder. As in the case of John we had to be shown again that Jesus was the Christ. Do you ever go down into the valley so low that you forget your dependence upon the grace of God and strive in vain to deliver yourself? Are your strivings and seeming zeal ever so formal and cold that you are condemned as a hypocrite? Now I would like to go back in my meditations, the Lord willing, and briefly state to you some of the highlights along the pathway that I have traveled. I was born September 28, 1906, in Amity, Arkansas. I was brought up under the tutorship of religious parents of high moral character who taught that a home in heaven was gained by good works done by individuals here. I was taught that I was capable of performing these good works upon my own volition. I grew up as a regular attendant in Sunday School and church, and zealously studied the Bible from my earliest recollections. I began to speak in public before I was ten years old and was given the position as Sunday School teacher in my early teens. When I was fifteen I became a member of the Kelly Division of the Missionary Baptist Church, and on the next night gave a prepared lecture on John 3:16. I was often called upon to speak in the absence of ordained ministers, and while yet in my teens was ordained to the full work of ministry in that denomination. I had a bad case of “I-itus” feeling myself to be worthy of imitation and classing myself as being the most influential speaker in that section of the country. I was very zealous in revival meetings trying to show sinners that they were treading the path that leads to hell and urging them to turn, do right and be saved.

During this period of my career I think God taught me my first lesson. An ordained minister from Hot Springs, Arkansas had been selected to conduct a revival in the community where I was teaching school. Night after night he vehemently warned sinners to flee the wrath to come. He had labored hard to move them to action but not one had come to the "mourner's bench." The night before the meeting was scheduled to close he came to me and told me that he had done all that he could do and had gotten no results, requesting me to take charge the next night and see what I could do. I agreed to do this as I saw that it was an opportunity for me to make a greater reputation. I carried my Bible and notebook with me to school the next day and on my return stopped beside a brook and outlined a sermon on the theme, "Sinners in the hands of an angry God," using as a text, "Thou shalt be cut off and that without remedy." I was anxious for the meeting to begin that night. I was blessed with oratorical eloquence to such an extent that hell was pictured so awful, and God as being so angry at their unconcernedness that when the altar call was made, many people flocked to the altar. I have never forgotten the anxious expression of fear amidst the tears on the face of the first one who extended her hand toward me at that time. Neither shall I forget the awful tones of the voice of Almighty God when He spake to me just before I took her hand in mine. This voice thundered, "Who are you, that you should invite?" My fears were made more terrible when that same voice convinced me that I was a sinner, a hypocrite and a liar. This was the first time that I had ever realized myself as a sinner. The blackest, vile person that I had thought of before seemed then to be my superior. While I was in this awful frame of mind people tried to tell me how proud I should be to be able to move the people in such a way. Their intended flowers were as thorns that condemned me more. I

slipped out of the house as soon as possible and tried to flee from that terrible condition. I tried to get myself right with God. The things that I had gloried in before were as filthy rags. For months and months I moped about as a condemned sinner finding no comfort or consolation in anything. I finally had given up the idea of making myself right with God when it pleased Him to teach me another lesson. Circumstances over which I had no control placed me in a community far distant from my home where they had heard of me as being a preacher and had arranged for me to preach one Sunday night there. I was given this information only one hour before the service was to begin. My pleadings would not convince them that I had quit appearing before the public as a preacher. Being caught in such circumstances, I was finally persuaded that I could act the hypocrite at least one more time. I thought I could pick up one of my old themes and lecture to them, but I could not think of anything other than that I was a sinner. Up to this time I had never heard of anyone posing as a preacher who would be so disgraceful as to confess himself to be a sinner. I went before a big audience unprepared, with a blank mind concerning the Scriptures. My foremost thought was that I was a sinner. I was so upset that I did not go into the form of prayer, but groaned within myself, “God, have mercy on me.” I have never known whether I read any scripture or not, but I was given to feast upon the power, wisdom and holiness of God. God revealed Himself to me that night as having all power in heaven and earth; who spoke and it was done; who commands and it stands fast. I saw Him as being so wise that He could consecrate the acts of men and devils to His own praise and glory. He appeared as being so holy that He had a wonderful and righteous purpose in everything. When I came to realize where I was that night, I closed the services, yet feasting upon the characteristics of God. I continued to enjoy these thoughts enroute home that Tried In The

Furnace 11 night in my car alone. When about midway home, my thoughts were reversed from thinking upon God to thinking of myself. I saw a great gulf between God's power and my inability; God's wisdom and my foolishness; God's holiness and my sinfulness. I tried again in vain for months to span this gulf and get myself right with God. When I had given up all hope it pleased God to teach me another lesson. Several months later I was teaching in this little town where I had this last related experience, when a member of the school board especially requested me to attend with him a Wednesday night service in the home of one J. H. Langston. Elder A. D. Wall, who then lived in Arkansas, was scheduled to preach. Up to this time I had never associated with Primitive Baptists and did not know anything about them. I had heard that there was an ignorant people who lived in remote places who were called "Hardshells" whom I was taught to fear and ignore. I was informed that they justified themselves in the many devilish acts that they performed and charged all their meanness to God. I had heard that Uncle Henry Langston was a "Hardshell" and I quickly informed this man that I did not care to attend the service with him, giving him my reason. He immediately told me that he was surprised at my attitude and further added, "If I have ever heard a Primitive Baptist sermon you preached it here in this town." I told him that I would go with him for curiosity's sake as I had always wondered what I said that night, and that I had yearned for such experience again. I went and Elder Wall was blessed to take up every question that had bothered my mind and answered it with the Bible to my entire satisfaction. Before he was through speaking that night I was blessed to view a character that I had never seen before. I saw Jesus who was very God and very man span the gulf that was between me and my God. I saw that dual character loom up before me with one foot upon the earth, and the other upon the throne of God in heaven. I saw Him

stoop lower than the angels, yes lower than men. I saw Him as He reached down into the miry slime of the slough of sin, and even reach low enough to reach vile me. I saw Him as He picked me up and washed me whiter than snow with His blood, and presented me without blemish, spot or wrinkle carrying me across the gulf and presenting me in the holiest of holies in the presence of Almighty God as a fit subject for that eternal city. Such mercy and amazing grace I had never been able to behold before. I was made to cry out praises to His adorable name. I thought I had confessed Jesus as my Savior but found I had known nothing about Him before. I found myself speaking in a strange language that all my former associates knew nothing about and they concluded I was crazy. I began attending Primitive Baptist churches and to my surprise found that the ministers were telling my experience and thoughts far better than I could express them. In the year 1930 all my earthly possessions were taken from me; my first wife died; my body was afflicted and my parents turned a cold shoulder to me feeling that I had disgraced their good name. In the midst of all this, and my feeling of unworthiness, I became a member of the church that same year and was liberated to speak in the name of Christ. I was ordained in the year 1934 and married a Primitive Baptist girl whom the Lord has blessed to be a sweet companion to me. She understands my infirmities, and overlooks my many faults and patiently shares with me the heartaches and tribulations attached to the career of a minister of the gospel. I have traveled among this people in the different sections of the country and find such unity in belief that I am persuaded that all are taught by the same Teacher. I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He is our salvation both for time and eternity. God has taught me in His wonderful dealings with me the doctrine of salvation solely upon the merits of Jesus Christ to such extent that any other doctrine

is strange to my ears. I believe Jesus accomplished the law to a jot and a tittle, and His accomplishments were accredited to the account of the people who were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. His blood covered all the sins that God's people have ever committed, are committing now or ever shall commit. This is not proclaimed because of any theory advanced by anyone, but because of the things that I have experienced.

EXPERIENCE

Signs of the Times, January, 1938 Elder W. D. Griffin Dear Brother in Bonds: I received your very comforting letter about a month ago, and was certainly elated over the contents, but wonder why any one would stoop so low as to even notice such a wretched character as I am. Brother Griffin, I feel to hope that we have a few things in common. Your age exceeds mine only about four years. In relating your experience you gave the "waymarks" so plainly that I believe we were brought over the same road. We are both members of the same faith and order. We have both been placed under the same yoke of the ministry. Having so many things in common, I am impressed to relate to you by pen some things of my experience along life's way, if it be God's will. I have never attempted to write it before, but have been blessed to tell it in public a few times. It seems so different from the experience of most people that I very often doubt it being an experience of grace. I was reared by very religious parents, my father being an ordained minister of the "Church of Christ" (Kelly division of Missionary Baptist). Very few Sundays did I miss Sunday School and church services. I was reared in an Arminian atmosphere. I do not remember ever hearing the term "Primitive Baptist," or ever meeting a "Hard Shell" until I was grown. I was taught that there were a very few ignorant, devilish people, who lived in the backwoods,

who were called “Hard Shell,” who I was to shun as a wild beast. Of course I did not want to even meet one. At a very early age I too, joined the organization with my parents. Being termed as one of the best “kid speakers” in our community, I was solicited to take part in the testimony meetings. When I was sixteen years of age I obtained a teacher’s license, and began to teach both literary and Sunday School. This, of course, helped me “practice up” on public speaking. Being first in the school-room, first in the Sunday School class, and first in the other community socials, gave me a good case of “Big I,” and the foremost symptom was selfrighteousness. Then I was solicited to preach, and having such a good opinion of myself, and seeing so many of my fellow-men falling so far short of me, I also thought it prudent that I should be clothed with the authority to tell them of their wicked ways, and admonish them to “get right.” Therefore, I was ordained, and zealously pursued my task, and went along smoothly for a while. Now, dear brother, the saddest, most heartrending and serious part of my experience I am about to tell. The thoughts of it even now make me shudder. One certain night, during a protracted meeting in our community, I was called by the “big preacher” from the city, to take full charge of the service. He called me the night before, and spoke thus: “Brother Lambert, I have been preaching here every night for almost a week with no results. No mourners have come forward. Tomorrow night I want you to make the altar call after you have preached.” Of course I was elated over the opportunity to try my luck. The next day I studied the proposition seriously. I decided on the theme, “Sinners in the hands of an angry God,” using “Thou shalt be cut off, and that without remedy,” as a text. That particular night I must have been blessed with rhetorical eloquence, for when I made the altar call old men, old women, boys and girls began at once to flock to the altar. Dear brother, I suppose

you think I should have been somewhat overjoyed. Naturally I would have been, but alas! there seemed to be an audible voice which spoke, “Who are you, that you should invite?” This would not have been so bad if the answer had not come immediately by the same voice, “You are a sinner vile and needy.” I wanted to run out at the door and hide from every one. As soon as I could I did get away from there. Oh how miserable I was! On that night I saw myself as a sinner for the first time, and I went about to right myself. The more I tried to do the deeper in sin I sank. I tried until I could try no more, and gave it up as a hopeless task. Of course I gave up trying to preach, but I was still in possession of my credentials. Some little time after that, I drove into a little town quite some distance from home, about sundown. Some of the people there knew I was coming, but did not know I had given up trying to preach, and had given out an appointment for me that night. As I drove in town the church bell began to ring, and I asked the one that I was stopping with what it meant, and he informed me that I was to preach that night. I told him I could not do it, but he informed me that it was too late to back out then. I saw the trap I was in. I was in a strange community, so decided to act the hypocrite and get up one of my old themes and texts and raise a reputation for myself in that community. But alas! I could not think of a thing. I tried to think of some Scripture and to take some of my Sunday School knowledge, but that had all sunk into oblivion. I know I tried to think soberly on the Scriptures, but I could not. I could think of nothing except how sinful I was, and I knew it would not do to tell them that, for instead of giving me a reputation I would lose it. A great audience was in front of me when I went behind the pulpit and I was as blank of thoughts of the Bible as any one could be. If I ever prayed I did then. I groaned, “Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.” I became unconscious of action or thought, and when I became conscious I was exhausted

and was standing there feasting upon the power, holiness and wisdom of God. I left that place thrilled to the highest, still feasting upon several of the attributes of God. I was driving home in my car that night by myself, still feasting, when the train of thoughts was turned. I saw myself the blackest of black sinners, and then glimpsed God as the holiest of holies. I saw myself as most foolish and God as all-wise. I saw myself unable to perform anything, and God as having all power. What a great gulf there was to be spanned between my condition and the requirements of the law. I went along groping in this predicament for quite some time. Finally the sweetest of my experience came. I was teaching school in the community where I had witnessed that glimpse of God, when one day a neighbor came to the place where my wife and I resided. He suggested that we go to a home that night to preaching. He said Elder A. D. Wall, of Amity, Arkansas, would preach. I asked him if they were "Hard Shells," and told him if they were I did not care to hear them, because they believed that a man was justified in killing another because God predestinated it. He answered thus: "I just supposed you would be interested, for if I ever heard a Primitive Baptist sermon you preached it here last year." I answered, for curiosity's sake, "I will go". I have never been able to recall anything that I said that night, as I seemed to be in a subconscious state, and have often wondered what I did say. Therefore, I consented to go for the first time to hear a "Hard Shell" preach, and I was glad I did go. I accused Elder Wall of being a mind reader that night. He was blessed to take up each question that came to my mind and to thresh it out to my satisfaction. That night I was blessed to see another attribute of God: that of mercy. I saw the character who was able to span the gulf between my sinfulness and God's holiness; my inability and God's power; my foolishness and God's wisdom I saw Jesus, who was verily God and man, with one foot on God's side of the gulf

and I the other on puny man's side. I saw him, as it were, pick up sinful men, whom God had chosen, and cleanse them with his blood and place them safely on the other side, without spot or blemish, to bask in the sunlight of God's eternal love and power forever on the sunny banks of sweet deliverance. Jesus died in my low room and stead, tread the wine-press alone. In my stead (as I hope) he kept the law to a jot and tittle. The keeping of this law by Jesus was charged to my account, my sins were laid on his shoulders and he bore the penalty. His life's blood was shed while hanging on the cross of Calvary for the remission of my sins, as I hope. This experience was so consoling to me that I thought my troubles were over. But my lot seems to be akin to Job's. The last of my experience told was at the dawn of the year 1930. I will tell briefly some of the things that took place with me that year. Three cars were wrecked for me, a son was born to us and in about a month my wife died with pneumonia, I lost my position and health. I had to give up teaching because I was not able to meet the requirements for a license of course. With all this, and doctor bills, funeral expenses and other things, I suffered a nervous breakdown. In that year I was received in Cedar Hill Church. In September I was visiting the South Ouachita Association, among strangers in the flesh. I was so nervous and burdened down with something that I could not face any one. On night, at the home of Elder J. R. Evers, a sister (who was a total stranger to me) requested that I be called on to say a few words. I was on the outside of the house, but was called in, and God blessed me with the light and liberty of unloading that burden. In the course of time I was licensed to preach. Then, against my protests of not being qualified, called for my ordination, which was carried out while the South Arkansas Association was in session, in September, 1934. I met and married my second wife in that year, and God blessed me with the privilege of baptizing her last year.

Brother Griffin, I have tried to give you some of the marks of the road I was forced to travel. I am glad that God blessed you to come to Arkansas, and hope that we may meet again. If you receive any comfort from this give God all the praise. Pray for me at the throne of grace. Hoping in Christ for my soul sufficiency, I am your brother, Signs of the Times, Vol. 106, No. 1 - January, 1938

THE PATH OF GOD'S CHILDREN

There is a God who rules All things by His own hand He knows how to use His tools In all nations of every land. Everything redounds to His praise; Or else 'twould never have been, His people –He knows how to raise From the terrible pitfalls of sin. He teaches them, it is by grace That they're redeemed from the fall. If justice were meted to the Adamic race, Hell would be the place for all. They are taught by the Spirit of God That they are at best but vain; In the paths of sin they trod, Thus have that crimson stain. Nothing can cleanse so white As Jesus' precious blood, Nothing else can make them right Nor cause their hope to bud. Ephraim is His firstborn. He brings him through the fire. As with the unicorn's horn, He pushes him into the mire. Drives him to the end of the earth; Then we hear Ephraim weep, He is undergoing the new birth That manifests him as a sheep. Yes, we hear Ephraim bemoan Saying, "Thou hast chastised me, I am but vanity when alone; I solely depend upon Thee. "Turn me and I shall be turned – Lead me and I shall be led; Thy Holy law I have spurned; I am as powerless as one dead. "In ashes I am made to repent, And even my thoughts I hate. If justice upon me was sent, I would be in a terrible state." Sometimes, I hope, 'twas the law Written in my inward parts Which revealed to me the flaw Of possessing

this sinful heart. Thus, a hope to me is revealed That it takes that godly light, To show me I need to be healed Before I could be made right. Then according to my convictions We must be ruled with a rod; Chosen in the furnace of affliction, To be the tried children of God. – Composed
November 9, 1934

AM I A GOD-CALLED MINISTER!

You will note from my autobiography that I came under the hands of two presbyteries –being ordained twice by man in each of two organizations to the work of the ministry. One of these acts must have been a mistake, maybe, both of them. The great question: Am I a God-called gospel minister? Let us try these two calls by analysis and contrast to determine whether or not either be of God. I was in my "teens" when hands were laid on me by the first presbytery. I was of the opinion that the plan of salvation was offered to everybody. Each and every one of the family who came to the "age of accountability" possessed equal and sufficient ability to "accept the plan" by complying with certain conditions and thereby earn Heaven as their home by their own merits. I consented to that ordination or "call" upon the following basis of reasoning: 1. I had accepted the "Plan." 2. I had complied with the requirements. 3. I was prepared to teach others these conditions. 4. I was able to speak fluently and interest the hearers. 5. My walk and conversation was more becoming than others. 6. This demanded their high esteem and great respect for me. 7. It gave me opportunity to build a greater reputation by influencing others. As the reader will note in my other writings relative to my experience, the time came when this was all proved to be vanity. I had greatly deceived myself and others. The thought that I had so

vehemently spoken untruths completely banished from my mind any thought of ever again speaking publicly in the name of the One whom I had so greatly blasphemed! The day I was received into the fellowship of Cedar Hill Primitive Baptist Church of Christ near Amity, Arkansas was one of the greatest surprises of my life because I realized myself to be the chief of sinners. I was worse than any other because I had used God's name in vain while wearing the cloak of religion from the pulpit! I had pretended to be something when I was worse than nothing! I thought this would forever bar me from such a sacred place as the pulpit. The high privilege of sitting silently with the brethren was too sacred for so great a sinner as I felt myself to be. Soon after I was received into the fellowship of the Church I was attacked with such despondent and depressed condition of mind that I felt to have but few more hours to live at most. This continued without a moment of relaxation for days and weeks that seemed to be ages. I was so burdened with an unbearable weight that I felt my life was being crushed. Many nights I went to my room convinced that I would never see the sun rise again. Such loneliness and heartache is indescribable. All my dreams were as vexing as my daily thoughts. Groanings and yearnings for God's mercy availed nothing. I was convinced one night that all this was upon me because I had deceived the people of God. I must have fallen asleep, for either in a vision or dream I was standing before a congregation of people preaching upon the text: "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." I received such joy in my confessions that I awoke rejoicing in mind for the first time in weeks and months. I immediately reached for the Bible and searched for some text of Scripture that would harmonize with that expression. I was somewhat surprised when I found it verbatim in Job 42:6. This was the first time the thought occurred to me concerning preaching with the Old Baptists. The thought caused me to shudder and I began

to argue my disqualifications. “I am ignorant and my brethren are wise. Their walk is godly and my walk ungodly. They are content and I am disturbed.” These arguments became so numerous that the idea of preaching was dispelled from my mind and I was again possessed with the same melancholy state of mind. I recall one night that I tossed in my bed for hours and tried to pray that the burden be removed. When I became exhausted I was suddenly impressed with the thought, “There is something you MUST do.” I asked, “What is it, Lord?” There was no reply, thus no relief. I began to reason. “I am unfit to be a member of the church. I have deceived these good people. I MUST frankly confess to them and ask them to exclude me from their fellowship.” “Lord, if this be what I must do give me relief.” Yet no relief came! I asked the same question concerning many acts that came to mind. Still no relief. Frustrated to the extent of insanity, I felt I MUST die. The reality of dying in this condition so horrified me that I cried in exasperation, “Lord, anything!” The command came like a thunderbolt, “Preach Christ the Way.” I answered aloud, “I will preach.” Suddenly my body ceased its trembling. My aching heart soothed. My surging and throbbing breast was calmed. The terrible weight was lifted and the burden removed. I went to sleep praising God for the relief of a troubled mind that had tortured me for many days. I had the first hours of peaceful sleep that I had enjoyed in weeks. I awoke the next morning as convinced that I would preach as any one has ever been impressed of something they must do. The relief did not last long. My disqualifications came to mind again. Finally I thought of one possible qualification: “You have experience in public speaking.” This one sunk into oblivion when I considered: 1. Heretofore you have been sure of yourself concerning the subject matter and preparation; now, you are uncertain and unprepared. 2. Before, you felt to have more knowledge on the subject than your hearers; now you are

more ignorant than any one of them. 3. Before, you felt they would listen because they esteemed you as their superior; now, you feel to be less than the least. 4. Before, you were without fear and boldly appeared before any congregation; now, you are even fearful of yourself. By this time I was strolling down a country road and must have gone into unconsciousness, because when I became conscious, words were flowing with ease from my mouth and a peculiarly constructed pulpit was before me. Tears of joy were flowing from my eyes. I looked out before me for the congregation and could see nothing but a winding road in front and trees on both sides. I reasoned: "This pulpit is an imagination of the mind caused from the tears that beclouded my eyes. I dried my eyes, blinked them, looked, again and the pulpit was still there. I was yet walking, but this last sight so excited me that I stood still, closed my eyes for awhile, opened them again, but the pulpit was still in front of me. Something said, "I will put thoughts in your mind and words in your mouth when you are behind the pulpit." Then, the pulpit vanished and I was trembling from head to feet. I was so weak I could hardly stand and was about four miles from home. While walking home I feasted upon this new experience and conclusion that God speaks through His ministers. I thought I would tell this experience to my brethren but soon it seemed so unreasonable that doubts began to haunt me and I have kept it until this day with this exception: once, while speaking for the first time in a meetinghouse, I looked down and saw this peculiarly constructed pulpit in reality and paused in the discourse to say, "I have seen this pulpit before." Even though I have not told this, it has been a great encouragement to me many times when going behind the sacred stand, feeling so unprepared. A few days later, (September 1930), I attended an adjoining association near Eldorado, Arkansas. It was the first time I had been outside my home vicinity while among

this people. They were strangers in the flesh but yet I felt drawn toward them. While there I visited in the home of Elder T. J. Evers where some visiting elders were scheduled to preach. My feeling of unworthiness would not permit me to be in the room during preaching but I listened from the outside. When they had finished preaching, someone called my name, came after me, ushered me inside, and informed me that I was requested to preach. I was never so shocked in my life as I thought no one had any idea that I would ever attempt to preach, especially to make my first attempt away from home among strangers. I had not hinted to anyone of such impression. I do not know anything I said that night. However, I experienced some relief of mind in the exercise. When I finished I walked from that room into an adjoining room to be alone. I was shocked with the sight of gray-headed elders sitting in that room with their heads bowed. I thought, "What a fool I must be to attempt to speak in the name of the Lord in the presence of these great men of God." I was so ashamed of myself. The next meeting at my home church I was called upon to introduce services with hymn and prayer. Since that time I have attempted many times to speak, accompanied with great fear and much trembling. My deep-felt sense of unworthiness and inability has been so uppermost in my mind that I have wondered much of the time, "Do I have the right to occupy such a sacred position and attempt to speak in the presence of God's people?" I bored the listeners for months by using much of the time in trying to express my unworthiness and inability. My estimation of myself as being so sinful was so impressed on my mind, that many expressions relative to this conviction were made each and every time I appeared before a congregation. It gave me relief but I was not aware of being so boresome to the hearers. God saw fit to use a sister to bring this to my attention. She told me of a conversation she overheard between a daughter and her father. Her daughter

announced, “Dad, I am going over to Oakland Schoolhouse today to church.” Her father answered, “What? Do you want to hear that mean man tell of his meanness?” This caused much meditation. I have felt as unworthy, sinful and unfit since then but have been cautious to brief my expressions concerning it. This conversation proved to be a great blessing to me and (I am persuaded) to those who have to sit under the hearing of my voice. Many times in the exercises of speaking in the presence of this people I lamented much in the closing remarks upon how God had withheld His Spirit from me and that I had been given “no light” upon the subject under discussion. One day I heard an elder preach. His discourse melted my heart and I experienced exultant joy from the beginning of his sermon throughout. His words were heavenly and the thoughts expressed were rapturous to me. He paused at the end of this glorious sermon and said, “I have had no unction of the Spirit while speaking. What I have said has been wholly formal and strictly mechanical.” This was like pouring ice water on me. It made me shudder. Since that time I have not expressed these lamentations in closing –though I have felt it. It may be mechanical and formal as far as the speaker is concerned, but God is blessing the hearer with the unction of the Spirit. Since then I have been more content with the thought that God blesses me to the extent that it pleases Him and consecrates it to the hearers to the degree of His pleasure. Who am I to lament if He holds all joy from me and blesses the hearers with exceeding joy? Sometimes when feeling the coldest in delivery of a discourse I have seen the Spirit manifested in the faces of the hearers. Could such a sermon be classed hypocritical, formal, and/or mechanical? Praying in public was such a task for me. I felt it to be the greatest sin to utter words intended to be directed to God without feeling to be in the spirit of prayer. I refused to engage in public prayer many times when called upon because of this conviction. I

recall once being in the predicament when I could not refuse even though I was convinced it would be formal and hypocritical! Words flowed fluently from my mouth but I was so cold that they seemed to mock me with the cry, "Hypocritical, hypocritical." When I arose from the form of prayer I felt to be the greatest blaspheming hypocrite in the world! I was greatly surprised and astonished when something very unusual took place. One man immediately arose, came toward me with tears streaming down his face, took me by the hand, and exclaimed, "What a wonderful prayer. You worded the yearning of MY heart!" I was then convinced that God was pleased sometimes to put the yearnings in one's heart and the words to express these yearnings in another's mouth. May I ask the reader, "Could this prayer be classed as an hypocritical prayer?" Since that time I have not refused to engage in public prayer when called upon. My wife was the first one that I baptized. Officiating in the ordinances of the church seemed too high for me. I felt so unworthy to officiate that I felt so weak I could hardly stand and was trembling when I led her into the beautiful Caddo stream near Amity, Arkansas to baptize her. I felt that I could not go through this ordeal. I shall never forget the calmness and strength I suddenly experienced when I began the baptismal ceremony. Some of the most glorious experiences I have had was in the act of putting beneath the water candidates for church membership. God has always come to my rescue and converted the fear into sublime calmness in my attempt to engage in this sacred ordinance. It seemed to be the impossible for me to be used to comfort those who were bereaved because of a death in the immediate family. I shuddered at the thought of ever being called upon. If not deceived, the Lord has taken care of that also. I have been surprised and astonished at the words that have come from my mouth that were appropriate on such occasions. I have had like experiences in visiting,

praying for the sick, encouraging those who were so low in spirit, giving solutions to baffling problems, averting brethren from detrimental procedure, and striving for peace among troubled brethren. In every case that my efforts have been successfully used, it has been beyond any question with me concerning the source of strength. In every case all false ideas of authority being vested in me have been burned out through fiery trials and God has revealed Himself as the Author of all good acts which are godly. When it pleases God to work the will in you there is no shifting from His will to yours. His will has been so convincing to me that there has been no halting between opinions when it is placed in my mind. I have learned by sad experience that it is best to do nothing regarding a matter until you are made certain concerning what ought to be done. God has so thoroughly worked the do in me in many cases that I was unaware of what I was doing until it was already done. Could I give myself a pat on the shoulder and congratulate myself for doing something that had been done through me and I was unaware of it while it was going on? I felt many times in years past that I ought to lay aside my encumbrances and disengage myself from the vocations of this world and devote what little strength and mind that God had blessed me with to the service of the churches who were looking to me as their pastor. Circumstances over which I had no control brought me into this position. I was forced to give up my worldly career. I receive no salary nor wage from any one or ones. It has been so for years, but God has taken care to impress the hearts of friends and brethren to freely give of their means to us that we have not suffered in want of the necessary things of this natural life. Funds have come when needed without any solicitation to such an extent that I am fully persuaded that God controls the minds of the contributors even to the amount of contributions. When I am given to review my life as a minister of God and pastor of

churches, I feel that I have been very unprofitable. I have failed in many duties. I have fallen so far short of performing the duties incumbent upon a pastor that I am made to say, "I surely have been mistaken in it all." My brethren have been very tolerant toward me in bearing with my infirmities. Should they have been exacting I would have been severed from their fellowship long ago. I beg an interest in the prayers of each and every one of you who reads this. After writing this imperfect treatise upon this question it remains an unanswered question to me: "Am I a God-called gospel minister?"

SALUTATORY

January, 1946 To the editor, associate editors amid readers of The Signs of the Times: UPON REQUEST of Elder Dodson, and after due consideration, I consent for my name to be added to the Editorial Staff of The Signs of the Times. I realize the sacredness and responsibility of the position. I also realize my inability (of myself) to cope with the situation. Were it not for the confidence that God will control, I would not dare do this. Many periodicals have come on the scene and vanished in the past one hundred and fourteen years, but surely Jehovah controls the Signs in a wonderful way. God has blessed the writers to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. They have been blessed to contend for the tenets in accord with the doctrine of God our Savior. I have been made to believe in the sovereignty of God without limitation; the depravity of man in its full sense; the unconditional election of God's children by Jehovah; the limited atonement; the grace of God is effectual and irresistible; saints will persevere throughout this life and into eternity, solely and wholly by God's grace; and that in the

resurrection this mortal shall put on immortality, this corruption shall put on incorruption, this natural body shall be raised a spiritual body in heaven to unite with the complete family of God in praising him perfectly in an endless eternity. May I say in concluding my remarks, that it is not my purpose to read or write critically to find fault – but for edification. May each of us be blessed to edification instead of criticism. May God keep this periodical hewing close to its original prospectus and from heresy.

THE TRANSFIGURATION ON THE MOUNTAIN

Signs of the Times, June, 1938 IN MY MIND the transfiguration on the mountain was the most beautiful scene to be witnessed by man on this earth. If it pleases God to enable me, I desire to write of some of the beauties I see in mediation upon the grand story. Jesus took Peter and John and James and went up into a mountain to pray. He chose the ones to go with him. He did not give a broad opportunity to the multitudes, disciples or apostles, with the invitation "whosoever will," but "took" a special three of his special twelve of the disciples. These three that He took with Him up into the mountain were the same three that He took with Him down into the garden of Gethsemane. Peter, John and James not only witnessed the most agonizing scene, when Jesus was agonizing in prayer and sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, but also witnessed the most beautiful scene of His transfiguration. The thought we get from this fact is that those who are destined to suffer the greatest afflictions and tribulations in the valley of distress are also blessed to experience the greatest joys and brilliancy in the mountain of gladness. Peter, John and James must have not been of the progressive type of Christians we have today, who seem to

think Jesus needs help. Instead of helping Jesus pray they were “heavy with sleep” both in the garden of Gethsemane and also on the mountain of transfiguration. “As he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias.” The question that come to mind are, Who was Moses? and who was Elias? We find that the law was given to Moses by Jehovah. The law is referred to in the Bible as “the law of Moses” (Ezra 7:6; Neh. 8:1; Ezra 6:18). The ten commandments on tables of stone, together with ordinances, were given to Moses, who taught the law to the people. We find Moses connected with the law all along, therefore we conclude that Moses represented the law in that trio of talkers on the mountain. Who was Elias? Elias was that great prophet who predicted the drouth to king Ahab (1 Kings 17:1). Elias hid at the brook Cherith and was miraculously fed by the ravens. He raised a widow’s son and contested with Baal’s prophets, by whom God manifested Himself as God. He later slew these prophets at Kishon (1 Kings 18). God so blessed him and honored him that Elias ascended into heaven (2 Kings 2:11). He was the most honored of the prophets, therefore we conclude that Elias represented prophecy in that trio of talkers on the mountain. The third in that trio was Jesus Christ. They spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). In meditations, we hear Moses, representative of the law, giving the requirements of the law, that the law must be kept, and punishment for disobedience, will be completed and justice satisfied. Then we hear Jesus saying, Think not that I am come to destroy the law (Moses), or the prophets (Elias); I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. Then Moses and Elias departed and Jesus was left alone. Peter said, Let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses and one for Elias, not knowing what he said. In my experiences I have wanted to make three tabernacles, I have desired to

live up to the law requirements of duty as we read in Ecclesiastes 12:13, "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." Thus erect a tabernacle to Moses. I have desired to fulfill prophecy, in accomplishing the warfare and obtaining pardon for my iniquities (Isaiah 40:2). Thus erect a tabernacle to Elias. And at the same time I have desired to pay homage to that Scripture which reads, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:8-10). Thus erect a tabernacle to Jesus. In my experience there was a time when I verily thought the law, prophecy and grace were contrary. As Peter, I could not see how the three tabernacles could be constructed in one. While Peter was in a confused state of mind the God of heaven spoke thus from the cloud, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him." It was needless to build three tabernacles. The law of Moses and the prophecy of Elias were being fulfilled by Jesus Christ. This command from the clouds (I verily believe) removes the seeming contradiction of the Scriptures. The requirements of the law must be met, and Jesus was the only One who did it. Prophecy must be fulfilled, and Jesus was the only One who did it. Therefore, pay no more heed to the law and the prophets, for they were fulfilled by Jesus. "Jesus was left alone." Yes, He was sufficient to tread the winepress alone. He did not need Moses and Elias any longer. His services pleased the God of heaven. It so pleased the Father that this command from the clouds means (to me), pay no more attention to the law and the prophets, for they were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, therefore, "Hear ye Him." What do we hear Him saying? We hear Him saying, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." "I am the door, by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture"

(John 10:9). “No man can come to me, except the Father which sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44). We are made to realize we are not saved according to our power or works, but according to the power of God, who hath saves us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9). Therefore, the law system has disappeared as Moses disappeared. This law system was not destroyed, but fulfilled by Jesus Christ. If I am one who was chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, Jesus fulfilled the requirements of the law for me, and my account is so accredited. All the sins that I have committed, or will commit, were laid upon Jesus’ shoulders and He bore them on the cross and paid the penalty by shedding His precious blood for me. Brethren, my mind has traveled faster than I could write, and I know this is very imperfect and scattering, but may God be pleased to enable us by His grace to feast upon some of the beauties contained in the record of the transfiguration on the mountain. Signs of the Times, June 1983.

THE SEVEN SAYINGS OF OUR SAVIOR WHILE ON THE CROSS

Signs of the Times, April, 1939 BRETHREN, it is my desire to write a few lines, using Paul’s language as recorded in 1 Corinthians 2:2, “For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” I cannot find one thing in myself to boast of, therefore all the goodness I have any hope in is that which Jesus accomplished while here on this earth. I believe that He fulfilled the law to a jot and tittle, and suffered the penalty

for the many sins of God's chosen by shedding His precious blood on the cross of Calvary. Feasting upon the thoughts of the crucifixion of Jesus, brings to mind the seven statements that He made while hanging on the cross. Matthew and Mark record the fourth statement, Luke records the first, second and seventh, while John gives the third, fifth and sixth. Seven signifies fullness and completeness, and I verily believe the full and complete doctrine of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is given in these grand utterances Jesus made while suffering the intense pain and agony being nailed to the cross. Let us first notice the first statement Jesus made, which was a prayer to His Father, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 13:34). I verily believe this was a true prayer, inspired by the God part of the character that was hanging on Calvary's cross. I further believe that all true prayers are answered, therefore conclude that all whom Jesus was praying for were forgiven. He was praying for those who had nailed Him to the cross. We find that those who crucified Him consisted of both Jews and Gentiles. Those who naturally crucified Him were typical of those whose sins were laid upon His shoulder. Figuratively, God's chosen among both Jews and Gentiles nailed Jesus to the cross with their sins. "The wages of sin is death," and Jesus died in the stead of God's chosen. In fact, He died that God's people might live. In the death of Jesus justice was satisfied and the sins of God's people were forgiven. We, therefore, finally conclude that Jesus' prayer while hanging on the cross was answered. His second utterance was, "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). He was addressing these words to one of the malefactors crucified with Him. This one realized (as do all of God's children) that His crucifixion was just. He was also blessed to realize that Jesus was the Christ. Therefore he besought Christ to "Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Each time the penitent child of God realizes

his own hopeless condition unless he be "remembered" by that Christ who is the sufficiency of God's chosen. The other malefactor spoke as the ridiculing sarcastic world, who have never been brought to repentance and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus said to that penitent one who was crucified with him, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." I believe it is a paradise for God's chosen who feel justly condemned to die to realize that Jesus had remembered them. The third statement of Jesus was to his mother and the disciples He loved: "Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciples, Behold thy mother!" (John 19:26-27). The natural mother of Jesus represented Mother Wisdom, or the Holy Spirit. John, whom Jesus loved, represented those for whom He died. God's wisdom had designed the way by which justice must be satisfied. You will notice that John took the mother of Jesus unto his own house. Jesus told His disciples (John 14:18) that He would not leave them comfortless, but would pray the Father and He would send another comforter (John 16) which would guide them into the way of all truth. The mother of Jesus (Wisdom, the Spirit of truth) has abode in the city of God, the house of God's chosen, or in the hearts of His elect, the people for whom Jesus died. This Comforter is a grand Comforter, crying to Jerusalem, the city of God, that her warfare is accomplished; that her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. His fourth cry was, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34.) You will notice that the Son of God did not realize His relationship, by noting the difference in address. He formerly addressed God as "Father," but after being forsaken He addressed Him as "My God." Jesus was forsaken that those He died for might be owned. He could not have died had He not been forsaken. Jesus was bearing the penalty for the sins of God's elect, the mercy could be extended to them and the grace doctrine be

the truth. Jesus was as destitute of the wisdom as to why He was forsaken as any of God's children are when it pleases God to withdraw His Holy Spirit. The fifth saying of Christ on the cross was, "I thirst" (John 19:28). The result of being forsaken after enjoying the sweet relationship was this thirst. When Jesus thirsted he was given vinegar to drink. He was given something bitter to drink so that when God's children thirst they might be given something sweet. Jesus said in His sermon on the mountain, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Jesus drank the bitter cup that the people of God might be blessed to drink of that fountain of life. Yes, He wore a crown of thorns that God's elect might wear a crown of glory. He was forsaken that we might be owned. The sixth saying that Jesus made while nailed to the cross was, "If is finished" (John 19:30). He had fulfilled His mission upon earth. He had completely fulfilled law and prophecy. He had kept the law in behalf of God's children. He had suffered the agonizing pains of death as the penalty for the sins of God's people. Therefore, justice was satisfied and every one of God's elect was blameless and without blemish. "It is finished." Jesus said, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, but of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:38-39). Again, in John 4:34, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." There on the cross He said, "It is finished." We notice in the seventh saying that He was in possession of this wonderful relationship again as he addressed Jehovah as "Father." This alone shows that God was well pleased with His Son's accomplishment. In this seventh and last statement He said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 13:46). Then He gave up the ghost. This was a crowning work, worthy of acception with the Father. The voice which spoke

out of the clouds to those on the mount of transfiguration proclaimed concerning Jesus, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” Jesus said, I am the way, and the truth, and the life. I believe He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the Author and Finisher of our faith, therefore my determination among God’s people is not to know anything save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. In conclusion, permit me to say the editors and contributors to the Signs have been blessed to stay closer to this determination than have the writers of any periodical I have been blessed to read. May God forbid that private opinions, personal differences and confessions ever be published in this good paper which would mar the harmony of its contents. God grant its continuance. This wonderful doctrine of grace and love is soothing and comforting to this poor, sinful, wretched mortal, who through sad tribulations and experience has lost all confidence in self and the arm of flesh. As Job, my earthly possessions and wealth have been taken away, to make me realize that even temporal and natural things are unmerited and blessings of God. Dear readers, please write me when you can.

Signs Of The Times, April, 1939

HABAKKUK 1:12-18

Signs of the Times, January, 1940 MY MIND is now being exercised on some wonderful truth expressed by Habakkuk in the first chapter. The first paragraph expresses “the burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.” The burden was why he beheld grievance, spoiling and violence, and why there were those who raise up strife and contention. It is evident that the wicked doth compass about the righteous and wrong

judgment proceedeth. We are sometimes made to wonder with Habakknk why these things exist. Some would have us believe that this is the work of the devil over which God does not exercise control. But that god is not Israel's God. Our God works all things. We hear Him saying, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else: I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isaiah 46:9-10). "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? (Dan. 4:35.) We see the fact revealed in the second paragraph of the first chapter of Habakkuk that the raising up of the "Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling-places which are not theirs" is the work of God. God declares through the prophet that the heathen will not believe this though it be told them. The heathen of today will not believe that the raising up of the bitter, hasty and wicked people is the work of God. In relating the characteristics and actions of this bitter and hasty nation he also makes plain that "their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves." They are not forced to do these things, but do them of their own accord. This is their nature and delight. This thought is in harmony with James 1:13-14, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." Nay, the Chaldeans could not charge their wrong judgment and actions to the predestination of God, because it was their desire to do what they did do. Neither can man charge God with being the cause of his sins, even though the predestination of God embraced them, for man "is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust

hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:14-15). Yes, God created the waster to destroy, and the waster has pleasure in destruction. God also created the wicked for the day of evil, and the wicked hath pleasure in wickedness. The twelfth and thirteenth verses of the first chapter of Habakkuk give sufficient explanation of the purpose of God in raising up the bitter and hasty nation that deals treacherously and oppresses the righteous. God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity, therefore it is not for the sake of evil and iniquity that these things are prevalent, but "O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and O Mighty God, thou hast established them for correction." They are established and ordained for judgment and correction of the chosen of God. The wicked are the sword of the Lord, and they are raised up for that purpose. God hath a noble purpose in all things, and, as Paul states, We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. I believe it takes the wicked, the waster and all other things opposing godliness (even our carnal minds) to make up the furnace of affliction in which God's people are chosen. Ye are refined, but not with silver; ye are chosen in the furnace of affliction. Now let us quote the complete twelfth verse of the first chapter of Habakkuk, "Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction." The first part of this verse is an interrogative affirmation, ascribing all power to God. As He is from everlasting, and beside Him there is none else, let us conclude that nothing has transpired without His establishment and ordination. In the phrase, "We shall not die," "we" embraces all those whom "they" oppose. There are two classes of people under consideration in this chapter. "They" include the wicked and "we" include the righteous, or

children of God. Even though the righteous are oppressed and persecuted by the wicked (whose aim is to harm and destroy the righteous), God hath even established and ordained their wicked acts to the good of His children. He plainly states it is for judgment and correction. Instead of being for the destruction of His people (as the wicked aim) God hath established and ordained them for the judgment and correction of His chosen. "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of His correction: for whom the Lord loveth He correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth" (Prov. 3:12-13) (See Job 5:17). "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb. 12:6). "But if ye be without chastisement...then are ye bastards, and not sons" (Heb. 12:8). In Psalms 136:10-15, we read that God smote Egypt in their first-born and brought out Israel from among them with a strong hand and an out-stretched arm, and divided the Red Sea into parts, and made Israel to pass through the midst of it, but overthrew Pharaoh and his host into the Red Sea. God was using Moses to lead the children of Israel, and the enemy to drive them. The Egyptians were zealously pursuing the Israelites, with a motive in mind different from the purpose of God, which was to drive them to deliverance. Just as soon as Pharaoh and his army had completed the purpose God had in raising them up (to push the Israelites to deliverances) they were drowned. This brings to mind these two Scriptures: With loving-kindness have I drawn thee, and, as with the horns of an unicorn Ephraim shall be pushed to the ends of the earth. The Israelites were drawn by Moses and the cloud, pushed by the enemy and hedged in by the walls of water. I know this is considered hard doctrine by carnal reasoning, and does not give any credit or praise to man, but it pleases God to use the furnace of affliction to reveal this fact to God's children. Thus they are "driven to the ends of the earth." They are

driven to the end of their own ability and made willing to comply with that effectual command of sweet deliverance: “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else’’ (Isa. 45:22). The journey to the “ends of the earth” is extremely unpleasant, and the “furnace of affliction” well describes this process of the new birth. But this well qualifies the child of God to deeply appreciate the paradise which is the result of the remembrance of Jesus Christ being made manifest unto them. Brethren, write me when you have a mind.

LIGHT AND TRUTH

Signs of the Times, August, 1945 “O send out they light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.” – Psalms 43:3 LIGHT AND TRUTH are the prerequisites of one who worships God in spirit and truth. Neither this light nor truth is among the characteristics composing the natural man as born of a woman. This light and truth is foolishness to natural reasoning for “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him.” This light and truth cannot be acquired by study because in the same verse just quoted the scripture says: “neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Then it behooves God’s people to look to another source –other than themselves –for light or truth. Then they are made to pray to God for both light and truth. Both light and truth must be present at the same time in order that the saint of God be enabled to joyfully praise God in sincerity. “Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God” (Psalm 43:4). The truth is foolishness to the natural man and unless

accompanied by the light cannot be appreciated. The truth is that God determined "the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" Unless this light accompanies the truth to show us our inability and that it lieth not in man to direct his steps and that all things work together for good to them who love God we cannot realize his sovereignty nor appreciate this truth. The truth is God chose His people in Christ before the foundation of the world; that His people are the elect according to the foreknowledge of God. As John puts it "ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." Unless we are in possession of the light that reveals our inability to choose good things and that we naturally take darkness we cannot believe or appreciate this truth. The truth is that "by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Eph. 2:8-9. Until we are enlightened to the fact that the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, and with men it is impossible, we cannot believe this truth. Our seeming ability vanishes when the light manifests the gross darkness of our reasoning abilities. We are made to realize that God begins this work in us. Unless we are shown in our experience that we are not able to perform it after God has begun it in us we would be as the foolish Galatians. "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Yes it is needful that we undergo experiences as Paul, "to will is present with me: but how to perform that which is good I find not," before we can realize the truth that "it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Peter was in possession of the will to stand by Jesus Christ; yea, to go with him even to prison and in death, through he

be slain, yet it was necessary that he go through the sad experience of denying Christ –cursing and swearing – in order to convert him that it took more than the will to enable him to confess Jesus Christ. Peter learned that God must enable him with the Spirit and truth in each experience before he could truly worship Jesus. The fact that he knew him was not sufficient in this trial. It takes such experiences as these to enlighten and convert the individual to the truth that he cannot of himself do anything that is good in any part of the journey of the saint of God, and to bring about the confidence thus; "Being confident of this very thing, Tried In The Furnace 32 that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Then he is convinced that salvation, in any phase, is solely by grace. The truth is clearly expressed in the scriptures thus: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isaiah 55:11). The scriptures pointedly teach that the prerequisite for entrance into the kingdom of God is a radical transformation wrought by the spirit of God himself. And since this work on the soul is sovereign and supernatural, it may be granted or withheld according to the good pleasure of God. Consequently salvation to whomsoever it may be granted is entirely of grace. The born-again person comes to see that Jesus is in reality "the author and finisher of our faith." (Heb. 12:2). When Jesus said: "Lazarus, come forth," a might power went with the command and gave effect to it. Lazarus probably was not conscious of any other than his own power working in him, but when he was enlightened to the situation he undoubtedly saw that he had been called into life wholly by divine power. God's power was primary – his was secondary and would never have been exerted except in response to the divine. The truth is as Paul teaches, that believers are not under law, but under grace. "For sin

shall not have dominion you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Romans 6:14). Sin cannot cause their down-fall for they are under a system of grace and are not treated according to their deserts. "And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace." (Romans 11:6. "Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression." (Romans 4:15). "For without the law, sin was dead." (Romans 7:8). That is, where the law is abolished sin can no longer subject the person to punishment. "Ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ." (Romans 7:4). The one who attempts to earn even the smallest part of his salvation by works becomes "a debtor to do the whole law." (That is to render perfect obedience in his own strength and thus earn salvation) Gal. 5:3. When God sees fit to chasten His children by temporarily withdrawing His Holy Spirit or His providential mercies – or His light and truth – the poor child of God is corrected and converted from any trust or confidence in himself and will again be praying to God (not to himself) for both light and truth. This is the truth as proclaimed in the scriptures but light must accompany this truth before it can be believed or appreciated. Jesus said: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." (John 14:6). If you contend that you are any part of that way you deny the words of Jesus. "The spirit of truth, will guide you into all truth." (John 16:13) and will enable you to realize that Jesus is the truth. Yes, Jesus is the life. When the divine operation of God's Holy Spirit is inactive the individual is dead as far as ability to do good is concerned. My experience harmonizes with Paul's experience when he said: "I die daily." We are made to realize that God must work in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure before we can walk godly in this present world. When God sends forth His light it manifests man's righteousness as filthy rags in God's sight. Thus this life in and of ourselves that we have had confidence in has been worked out as God

works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. The farmer works in his crop and thus works out the obnoxious weeds and everything else that hinders his crop. Man's confidence in his own righteousness or anything of himself that he depends upon for salvation, whether in time or for eternity, must be worked out or abolished. The truth is, that we do not reach perfection in this present life; that evil is mixed with all we do, and that the children of God must be delivered (in the future) out of his bondage of corruption into the glorious liberties of the children of God. Unless this light shines into our hearts and makes us to see our vile nature, the filthiness of our own righteousness and the imperfection of all our deeds, we cannot realize this truth. We are mortal creatures hoping some day to be raised as immortal. We are corruptible desiring to be clothed with incorruption. We are natural and yet carnal but we have hopes of being made spiritual. The natural blood runs through our veins now which inspires our fleshly lusts, but we trust in some wonderful way that the Spirit of eternal life will replace the natural blood we now possess when we become residences of that Eternal City not made with hands. Signs of the Times, Vol. 113, No. 8, August, 1945

HOW LONG HALT YE BETWEEN TWO OPINIONS?

January, 1946 "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." - 1 Kings 18:21 THIS TEXT has been misinterpreted and misapplied by many worldly wise professors. Most of the people try to change this important question that Elijah asked to why halt ye between two opinions, and they try to make it applicable to the whole

Adamic family. This question does not even favor why but how long halt ye between two opinions? You will find by reading the context that the question does not apply to the entire Adamic race but specially to the children of Israel. I believe Elijah knew how long they would halt between two opinions until God made Himself manifest unto them that He was God. Then they would cease to halt between two opinions. I think that this text as for the specific purpose of showing Israel that the Lord was God; and to eradicate the other opinion that was possessing their hearts that Baal was God. Baal had 450 prophets and Elijah was the only true prophet at that time (as they thought). The hearts of the children of Israel were halting between two opinions. Outwardly, Baal had 450 prophets to one of the Lord. False prophets today are about the same ratio and even the children of God, when left to themselves, wonder if there is something to their false doctrine, seeing that they have so many advocators. You will notice, in the text, that Baal's prophets were to choose between two bullocks. False prophets today make their own choice; they even advocate that the people may choose their Savior and direct their own steps and seal their own destinies. This is a false opinion as we hear Jesus saying: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." Yes, Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that, "God hath from the beginning chosen you." Peter said: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood." Paul writes to the Ephesians: "According as he hath chosen us in him." This is the opinion as rendered in the Bible, which is different from the opinion as advocated by the false prophets. Thus here are two opinions; one is opposite to the other. False opinion: You are obliged to choose God. True opinion: God hath chosen His people. This false opinion will even be in the hearts of God's people until God sees fit to burn out this false opinion by making Himself manifest. Baal's 450 prophets were to have the choice of the two bullocks, the first call to

their gods and the heat of the day as well as the dry wood on the altar to prove their gods. They called loud and long and even cut themselves until blood gushed forth for their gods to answer by fire. At the time of the evening sacrifice, Elijah repaired the altar by building one of twelve stones and ordered great quantities of water to be poured on the wood and around the altar so as to fill a trench. After doing this he prayed quietly to the Lord to make Himself manifest and to prove to Israel that He was the Lord God and that He had turned their hearts back again. "The fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God" 1 Kings 18:38-39 Yes, our God is a consuming fire and it burned up every trace of man's work and left nothing. The false opinion had been burned from the hearts of this people and then (not before) did they cease to halt between two opinions. Dear child of God, have you not experienced the consuming fire of Israel's God? Have you not experienced the burning that consumed every false opinion; all of your self-righteousness; every ounce of your seeming ability–in fact, every thing, deed, or thought that you had ever trusted in a natural way? Yes, our natural opinion is that we can direct our steps. The opinion as stated in the Bible is, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." How long will ye halt between the two opinions? Ye will halt between the two opinions until God the Lord makes Himself manifest by proving to you that you cannot walk as you would. It is the opinion of the natural man that he can choose light; yet, the true opinion is that man chooses darkness rather than light. The opinion of man is that the natural man can receive the things of the Spirit and by studying and applying himself know them. This opinion is a contrast to the scripture; "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for

they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Man's opinion is, that surely, part of the way to heaven and eternal life is by the works of the creature. Yet, the opinion of the Bible is: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." Peter was halting between opinions on the mountain of transfiguration when he said: "Let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." I think Moses represents the law, and Elias represents prophecy in that trio. Peter was halting between two opinions as to which should be given the most honor. He continued to halt between these opinions until Moses and Elias disappeared and the Lord God answered from the cloud and said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." The false opinion of the law having any dominion over God's children was eradicated. We hear Jesus saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Then it is not part of law and part of grace but solely an unmerited favor through Jesus Christ. The opinion of some men is that they are enabled through the act of regeneration to perform or not to perform upon volition of their own free will and receive blessings in this time because of their obedience and cursings because of their disobedience notwithstanding the scriptures which say, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Also, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." And many other scriptures too numerous to mention which is in contrast to this false opinion. It is the opinion of man that he can live perfect in this present life. This opinion is not in accord with the apostolic experiences; therefore, it is a false opinion that must be burned out. People of God will halt between these two opinions –opinion of man and opinion of God – until the opinion of man is burned out. The opinion of the apostle is

plain, “When I would do good, evil is present with me.” “For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I.” And “I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.” Also, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” So, we are hoping and looking forward to the day when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality and this natural body shall be raised a spiritual body. Yes, we are awaiting the time when the creature shall be delivered out of the bondage of corruption unto the glorious liberties of the children of God, then we will cease from every false opinion.

SPIRITUAL INVENTORY

May, 1946 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fail. – Peter 1:10 THIS LANGUAGE is addressed “to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior, Jesus Christ.” It is not addressed to any other than the children of God. None can receive these sayings save the called and elected. Those who are the called and elected were so solely because of the righteousness of God and our Savior, Jesus Christ. Let us now proceed in our meditations to make our calling and election sure by using the same formula advocated by Peter in this same scripture. I have termed this formula a lesson in Spiritual Mathematics. First, he says: “Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall

neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:5-8). All these that we are to add must be of the same denomination and we must be in possession of them before we can add them. If we can determine the source of faith then we must conclude that these other things are from the same source in order to be of the same denomination. "By grace are ye saved through 'faith'; and that not of yourselves: it [faith] is the gift of God." Faith is the gift of God, so all these other things we are to add must be gifts of God. If the virtue and these other things be good they must be gifts of God. James says: "Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." So all these are good –thus gifts of God, and we must be in possession of each of them before we can add them. So, in this problem of Spiritual Mathematics, it does not concern any works of righteousness that we may perform but our pure minds being stirred up by way of remembrance of these wonderful gifts that God hath bestowed upon us. When we are so enabled by the Spirit to study to show ourselves (as being) approved unto God: we make our calling and election so sure in our minds that we are enabled to rejoice and not fall into despair. In working out our own salvation by recalling all the things that we have experienced we fear and tremble. We wonder has God been so gracious unto us as to work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Now in solving this problem for our own consolation, we must now consider: do we have faith in God and Jesus Christ as our Savior? If we find that we have any trust or confidence in ourselves for any part of salvation, to such extend we are void of faith in Jesus Christ but if we find that our experience teaches us that we must be saved solely upon the merits of Jesus and have no confidence in ourselves then we may conclude that we are in possession of faith.

Next, let us consider virtue. We fear and tremble now because in our flesh we can find no good thing. We are but sinners, vile and needy. Sin is mixed with all we do. We are comforted with this thought, surely it takes virtue to reveal to us our sinfulness. Were it not for this virtue we would be righteous in our own eyes. Surely, then, God hath given to us this virtue. This pure heart or virtue enables us to see ourselves as we are. It enables us to behold that sin is mixed with all we do. We see that in us (that is in our flesh) dwells no good thing. Next, we are glad to add knowledge. His children grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. God has taught us through experience more and more of our depravity and dependence upon grace and more and more of the meritorious, complete work that Jesus has performed, is performing and will perform for God's chosen. Surely knowledge may be added in the meditations of the pure mind concerning our experience. Next, we are to add temperance. Have our experience and belief tempered our actions? Have we not been restrained in some degree from thinking and acting as we have thought and acted heretofore? Are we not more sane minded in our estimation of others as well as ourselves? Have we not been restrained from trusting in ourselves? This peculiar experience has tempered our actions and even our associates and ideals are not the same. Now we see temperance added to the list in our meditations. Next on the list is patience. Paul said: "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience." Through much tribulation we have learned to patiently wait upon the Lord. We have been taught by that great Teacher that we are depraved and have no ability to lift ourselves from this condition but God has been so merciful unto us that when we were deepest in despair He has reached us many times. These experiences have wrought in us a degree of patience. We now see that God has blessed us with patience. "And to patience godliness." God has been so

gracious to us and has blessed us in so many ways. There is such vast difference between us and God. No comparison, but what a contrast! We are incapable; God is all powerful. We are foolish; God is all wise. We are sinful; God is all holy. We are creatures of time; God is eternal. We are finite; God is infinite. We are mortal; God is immortal. It is with reverential fear and amazement that we are made to bow to the shalls and wills of Jehovah and trust through Jesus Christ the God-man that His abundant mercy may even reach us. May we not add godliness to the list being possessed with this reverential awe and fear? To godliness, brotherly kindness. Once my earthly father, who was an ordained minister in another religious organization, accompanied me to a Primitive Baptist Church. While we were enroute home I noticed tears trickling down his cheeks as he said, "I would to God that the brotherly love you people have one for another was practiced by us." I asked him why he made such a remark, and he said, "Everyone can see that you folks love one another, the lovely smile, the warm hand clasp and the smiling countenance on your faces shows that you really love one another. In our church, there is confusion, strife and pride displayed in a big way." Even the heathen can say, "The Lord hath done great things for them." They can see the brotherly love that exists between brethren. When a brother rejoices the brethren rejoice with him. When a brother mourns, the brethren mourn with him. Surely brotherly kindness may be added to our characteristics. "To brotherly kindness, charity." Do we possess charity, which is love? We love God because He first loved us. We love the brethren with that godly love. This love is not akin to natural love. This same love God loves us with goes back and loves God and goes out and loves the brethren. We cannot be so selfish as to retain this love, but it is efficacious–reciprocates–it loves God and the brethren and enables us to do good to all mankind, especially to the household of faith. Now, we have

worked out our own salvation with fear and trembling. We have added each of the gifts that God has so graciously blessed us with. We have made our calling and election by the Spirit stirring up our pure minds by way of remembrance of the things that we have experienced. We will not fall into despair; our minds have been gladdened and we are made to rejoice over our experience that God has so graciously blessed us to enjoy. Now we praise His holy name for His goodness to the children of men.

HOPE

September, 1946 FOR SOME REASON I am impressed to write a short article on the subject of hope. I desire to use Romans 8:24-25 as a scriptural basis of reasoning. "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." Before treating directly on this subject, permit me to state that I believe the Holy Scriptures are to the children of God who have been born of the Spirit of God. Restating in other words–the Bible can be received only by those of God's children who have been born of the Spirit of God. When Paul speaks using the present tense of a verb it is experienced in time by those who have experienced this call to be saints. When he speaks using future tense it is yet to be experienced. When Jesus said, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted," I think he meant that God's children are mourners in this present world after they have received this pure heart, but shall be completely comforted after their sojourn here in time. According to Webster, hope is a "desired expectation." According to Paul, the things you have experienced is not a hope but a reality. Hope looks to

the future. We do not hope for that we are experiencing, but these experiences enliven within us a hope for something that is yet future. Paul reasons that we have the first fruits of the Spirit in this present life. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. All these proceed from the new heart that God has given His children. We yet bear about the body of this death. This pure heart enables us to see the vileness of our sin-polluted bodies. This pure heart reveals to us our awful condition and makes us to cry unto the God of heaven for deliverance from this sinful state. Although we are in possession of the first fruits of the Spirit, the creature itself is yet in the bondage of corruption. It is yet natural and thus subject to sin and death. We expect deliverance from the bondage of corruption solely upon the merits of Jesus in accordance to God's amazing grace. We desire this deliverance because the new God-given heart has made us to hate sin and love holiness. Paul said, "The body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." This is our state of being if Christ dwells in us. The creature that sins is the body of death that the child of God bears about in this present world. These sins cause the child of God to groan within himself waiting the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body. This will be realized when "the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." The word "also" in the above scripture means in addition to that which has already been experienced by us, to wit, the change of heart. Those who are in possession of God's Spirit are new creatures in Christ but have not realized the redemption of the bodies. He comforts us with this grand hope, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." A quickened mortal body would be

immortalized, thus would never die. I do not think God's children experience this immortalization of this body in this present time. This promise inspires us to patiently await this grand change. Paul did not expect it in this life as he said, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." So this hope goes beyond this life. He anticipates this change when he says, "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Death and the grave are things that we cannot converse with triumphantly until the grave has given up its victim, to wit, this body of death. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him." This is the reasoning of John and should suffice for us. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Psalm 17:15). I am not concerned over the question of whether we will know each other there, or any speculation concerning things yet to be experienced beyond that which is written. My only concern is, will I be among the number to enjoy eternal life wherever and whatever is? May God grant that we who have this hope implanted in us be enabled, by His grace, to dwell together here in time, in sweet communion and fellowship with and for each other. May He grant us the spirit of forbearance and humility. May He enable us to strive for peace and edification instead of strife and destruction.

WHY DO CHILDREN OF GOD SUFFER?

January, 1947 "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." – 2 Tim. 2:12 IT IS EVIDENT in all the experiences of the

children of God, as recorded in the Bible, that they all suffered in many ways. It is also evident in the experiences related by God's children in this age that suffering is yet common. They are all experimentally acquainted with grief, temptations, persecutions, tribulations and all manner of suffering. Job was afflicted in body and had all earthly possessions taken from him. All the Israelites suffered under Egyptian bondage. David was sorely oppressed and conscious of his great sins. Paul was beaten with many stripes and was made to exclaim, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Yes, this suffering is necessary, but why? We do not suffer in order to merit a home in heaven, because Jesus fulfilled the law to a jot and tittle for us. Therefore, it is solely upon His merits that we shall inhabit that place prepared for His saints in after life. He has merited our salvation in heaven by His obedience. We do not suffer in order to merit blessings in time for these were included in the "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" that was given to us by the Father through the merits of Jesus. These blessings that we enjoy in time are not merited by us as Paul says, "By grace are ye saved [in time] through faith; and that [faith] not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works lest any man should boast. We do not suffer to satisfy justice; nor to merit any blessing in time; nor to gain a home in heaven. We suffer because it was appointed unto us to suffer; God appointed to us this suffering just as He appointed Paul to suffer as an apostle, a preacher and teacher of the Gentiles (1 Tim. 1:11-12). In 1st Thessalonians 3:3 we read, "That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto." So then, this suffering comes by the appointment of God. It was also appointed unto Jesus to suffer and as it was necessary for Him to have suffered so it is necessary that we suffer. Paul reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs

have suffered (Acts 17:3). It was not only necessary that Jesus suffer because of our sins, but it was also necessary in order to learn obedience. Paul wrote to the Hebrews concerning Jesus, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. 5:8). So Jesus was taught obedience through suffering. We learn obedience by the things we suffer. Paul told the Philippian brethren, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 2:29). Even the suffering of God's children is a gift. It is a valuable gift for it teaches obedience. We are made obedient through suffering. Paul did not preach the gospel for filthy lucre's sake nor for any glory for He said, "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16). The sufferings that Paul experienced drove him to obedience. God is a perfect Teacher and will make His children obedient as it is said in Psalm 110:3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." How could we have believed that Jesus was the Christ had we never suffered? It took the sufferings of trials, heartaches, disappointments, vexation of our natural spirits, and failures in all our undertakings to teach us that we were not capable of saving ourselves and to make us to cry to some power other than ourselves to save us. Thus, by this suffering God taught us faith. How could we believe in an allwise sovereign God had we not suffered so many disappointments to teach us that we are at best but vanity and foolish, and to teach us that "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"? By these experiences God teaches that there is a power that is sovereign and worketh all things after the counsel of His own will and no power is able to withstand Him. It takes the sufferings that we experience to teach us daily that we are nothing-yea, less than nothing and vanity. This suffering is necessary to keep us humble and dependent upon the grace

of God. This suffering makes us to be constant in prayer to the God of Israel for His mercies. We cry unto Him daily for His continued mercies, realizing that we do not merit anything but His hot wrath. If justice were meted out to us according to that we deserve, hell would be our doom. Now we are comforted with this thought, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." Oh, blessed thought! Paul reckoned in his letter to the Roman brethren, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). Now we experience sufferings; then, we shall experience glory. Now we experience death; then, we shall experience life. Now we experience sin; then, we shall experience holiness. Now we experience foolishness; then, we shall experience wisdom. Now we experience hope; then, we shall experience reality. No other people suffer as the children of God suffer. No other people has experienced that pure heart that teaches that the best of man's righteousness is but filthy rags in God's sight. No other people are convinced that without Him we can do nothing. Other people conclude that they have some power vested in them upon the volition of their own free will. They think that they can, at least, accept or reject. We would be of the same opinion were it not for the sufferings that we experience that teaches us otherwise. This lesson is learned through suffering. May God be praised for blessing us with suffering to keep us humble and submissive to His will and at each other's feet.

CHARITY

May, 1947 IT IS ALARMING to me when I am given to meditate upon the strife and confusion that exists in Zion today! It is heart-breaking to find brethren trying to devour

and subdue one another! It makes me shudder to note the coldness that seems prevalent in our own midst. All this perplexity of mind has made me to inquire of the Lord for an understanding of His Spirit of love. May He define charity for us and make manifest that spirit in us. Let us now consider the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians where Paul was inspired to write to the Church at Corinth on this grand subject. I realize the modern usage of the word is the giving of alms, but the 3rd verse of this chapter states the possibility of bestowing all goods to feed the poor, yet be destitute of charity. I am persuaded to believe that charity is the love of God, love of Christ, and love to saints. God loves us with a godly love. This same love is reciprocated and also includes Christ and the brethren. We love God because he first loved us. God's children do love one another. I think that Paul in the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians was blessed to treat upon the greatness of charity and its properties. He says, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal." To be enabled to speak with the tongues of men is a natural gift from God, but to be able to speak with the tongues of angels is a spiritual gift from God. Man naturally cannot learn the language of the truth as pertaining to god and the holy Scriptures. Though a man be spiritually blessed to speak fluently and eloquently of the doctrine of God our Savior and have not charity, he is as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. If a person be blessed so that he can understand all mysteries and knowledge and have all faith both believing and doing miracles and have not charity, he is nothing. Paul does not mean that these gifts are nothing, destitute of charity. If I bestow all my goods to feed the poor in order to gain the reputation of men or for the purpose of obtaining eternal life it would be no profit to me. These deeds must be motivated by love to God or to Christ or to the saints before they could be rightly considered as profitable

for me. Now let us consider the properties and characters of love as Paul was inspired to note them. “Charity suffereth long.” The person blessed with charity is patient. He is slow to anger, and not hasty to revenge. He is enabled to bear much; has the grace of forbearance, and is blessed to forgive. “And is kind.” He does good to all men, even to his enemies. “Charity envieth not.” He that is possessed with this wonderful grace of God’s love does not envy the temporal happiness of others. He rejoices when he beholds a brother is blessed with gifts both temporal and spiritual. He does not envy the happiness of others even though they are decidedly more blessed than he. Joseph’s brethren were not charitable when they envied Joseph because he had a greater share in the affections of their father. The charitable person does not envy one of God’s children whose usefulness and success in spiritual undertakings are decidedly greater (seemingly) than his. “Charity vaunteth not itself.” He does not boast of either his natural or spiritual wisdom or possessions. He does not boast of what he does as his motive is love and not for the applause of men. “Is not puffed up.” He is not swelled with pride but is humble. “Doth not behave itself unseemly.” He is not unbecoming in his conversation or actions and has due respect for the aged and those of authority. “Seeketh not her own.” He is not seeking to promote his own selfish ambitions and desires but his care and concern is to the glory of God and to the children of the kingdom. “Is not easily provoked.” He is not easily offended. “Thinketh no evil.” Not that he is free from evil thoughts such as are sinful and vain, for testimonies throughout the holy scriptures affirm to the contrary. God’s children are forever desiring to be delivered from these sinful thoughts that are daily experienced. But I think that this character will forgive a brother his trespasses and will not try to find some way of revenge. He thinks not upon how to get even with someone who has wronged him. “Rejoiceth not in iniquity.” He mourns

because of his own iniquities. He is grieved because of the sinfulness of professors. He is troubled when he meditates upon the profanity and immorality of the world. “But rejoiceth in the truth.” He rejoices in the doctrine of God, our Savior, he is pleased when God is praised and man is set forth as nothing, yea less than nothing. Salvation by grace is his meat and drink. “Beareth all things.” He feels that all things work together for good to them who love God, even the suffering, persecution, and affliction is not in vain. He bears them without complaint, feeling that if justice were meted out they would be more intense. He does not feel that he should revenge wrong doing. “Believeth all things.” Everything that exists is according to the decrees of God. All things are for the praise of God and for the perfecting of God’s saints. None of the things existing is by chance. “Hopeth all things.” All things yet future is predetermined so that nothing will frustrate any of the promises of God from being fulfilled. “Endureth all things.” He is confident that all things are embraced in the eternal decrees of an all-wise and all-powerful God. He endures all the afflictions and persecutions for the elect’s sake and for Christ’s sake. The last to be endured is death. “Charity never faileth.” It may fail in the lively exercises of it. Selfishness and the cares of the world may be prevalent at times, but the love of God will not permit a child of God to fall finally into perdition. Charity is everlasting. It is ever the same. Prophecies will be fulfilled then cease to be prophecy. Hope will become a reality thus cease to be hope. Faith will terminate into a reality. Charity will be charity in the beyond the same as it was before the beginning of time. Every object of God’s love is just as certain for heaven and immortal glory as before time began. There is no change in the love of God for His people. Now, I feel that the Lord has blessed us with a few sweet thoughts on the properties and characteristics of God’s love as made manifest in brethren. Permit me to say, “By their fruits ye

shall know them." I wish to suggest to the citizens of Zion, that you beware of imposters. Beware of those having a form of godliness but not manifesting the grace of charity. I believe the time has come to watch as well as pray. May God grant us the grace of charity and the eye of watchfulness.

FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

Old Faith Contender, September 15, 1947 "What then? shall we sin because we are not under the law but under Grace? God forbid. Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey: whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness. – Romans 6:15-16 BEFORE regeneration we were the servants of sin. Our lusts were reigning over us. We loved it to such an extent as to be in full agreement and unity. In this cohabitable state lust is conceived and brings forth sin, and sin, when it is finished bringeth forth death. In regeneration it pleased God to take from us this stony heart, which was so enticed by lust, and to give us the heart of flesh, which has no affection for lust. It pleased Him to write His laws as commandments in this new heart which makes manifest this sin. "The commandment came, sin revived and I died" stated Paul. I believe Paul died to the enticement of this lust. After this time he no longer served sin willingly but loved righteousness. Yet sin dwelled in him. He was no longer so enticed by lust as to love it with his whole heart. His desire was to live righteously; but he was conscious of the presence of sin; for he expresses himself in Romans 7:17-20, "Now then it is no more I that do it but sin that dwelleth in me; for I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but

sin that dwelleth in me." We delight in the law of God after the inward man but we still bear about the body of death. We serve the law of God with our minds but with the flesh we serve the law of sin. This presence of sin in our mortal bodies is made manifest to us by the Spirit. The Spirit causes us to realize our wretched condition and enables us to pray for deliverance. When it pleases God to work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure we are made to realize it is solely by grace and we are blessed to be thankful to Him for these blessings. Thence, after regeneration grace reigns over its subjects to produce the fruits of the Spirit. The greatest of these fruits is love, – love of God, love to God and love to the brethren. This same love that God loves us is reciprocal. It causes us to love Him with this same love. It also embraces the brethren. God's people do love one another. How can you love God whom you have not seen if you love not your brethren whom you have seen? Another fruit of the Spirit is joy. None but sinners who have experienced the exceeding sinfulness of their sins and their inability to extricate themselves from its penalty, power and consequences, can appreciate and realize the joy of being delivered from sin by God's amazing grace. What a joy for a chief sinner to be remembered and loved! It is joyful for brethren to meet together. That Spirit produces peace. There is such rest experienced by that troubled soul which has been calmed by the still small voice that whispers sweet peace. What blessed peace to be remembered so graciously. One who has been convinced so thoroughly that hell would be his just abiding place realizes when a ray of hope of deliverance shines in his darkened and troubled soul. This peace flows from one to another. God's people strive for peace and are peacemakers because they realize the undesireableness of troubles. Those who are wrought upon by God's Spirit are longsuffering. They esteem each other higher than themselves, thus forbear one another's weaknesses. They forgive each other his trespasses

realizing that God has forgiven so much. If God has been so gracious as to forgive me of my many transgressions how can I not forgive a brother his trespasses, seeing his trespasses are so little and insignificant compared to my sins? God's Spirit produces gentleness. God's people are kind to each other and to all with whom they come in contact. They are not harsh in conversation or dealings. They are not offensive even in rebuke. A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger. It were better that a millstone be hanged about your neck and you be drowned in the sea than to offend one of these little ones. May God grant us to be gentle and kind to each other. When it pleases God to work in His people both to will and to do of His good pleasure they are good. Their walk and conversation are godly. They walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called. Their conduct is upright and commendable, even though that it does not so appear to them. This spirit produces faith. We are confident that God will fulfill His promises. We feel that God will finally save us in heaven. We trust in the efficiency of the atoning blood of Jesus Christ and His righteousness. We have confidence in brethren of their sincerity and fidelity. God's people are meek. They had rather yield than to cause trouble or confusion. They do not ride some particular hobby-horse or opinion of their own that they feel might bring discord among brethren. I do not like the expression, "I will stand alone before I will submit to such." That spirit is not akin to meekness. A "holier than thou" attitude is not characteristic of God's people. Their life is tempered with these graces. They are not fanatical in practice or conversation and in their dealings moderation is practiced. Paul instructs the church at Ephesus in Ephesians 5:3-4, "But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you as becometh saints: neither filthiness nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks." Is it then godly

that our conversation run along these lines? May He awake us out of sleep and bid us rise and walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise!

ACCEPTABLE WORDS

October, 1947 "The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth." – Eccl. 12:10. It is my purpose to address this article especially to God's called and qualified ministers. May the God of heaven be pleased to so direct my mind and pen that his purpose may be served in this attempt. May the words written be God-honoring and "words easy to be understood." I trust that God will be pleased to bless the reader with an understanding heart to rightly understand the thoughts that I desire to convey in this attempt. I am persuaded that misunderstandings among God's people have prompted some divisions, strifes and confusions. Some confusions in the church have been the result of strife over words of none effect. Isaiah prophesied of a time when those "that make man an offender for word" are cut off. (Isa. 29:21) Solomon says, "A word spoken in due season, how good it is" (Prov. 15:23). Considering the many divisions in the churches of this country that hold to the same principles of doctrine, I am convinced that a treatise on this subject would be in "due season." We read in Prov. 15:26, "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord: but the words of the pure are pleasant words". I believe God gives his people a pure heart that seeks to praise, honor and adore him: and to comfort, console and edify one another. This pure heart enables them to see themselves so vile and sinful that they esteem one another so highly that it is not their desire to offend. I believe those who are meek and

humble and inspired by the spirit of God are gifted to use pleasant and acceptable words even in rebuke. I do not think, however, that words that are not upright and true are to be used in order that they be acceptable and pleasant words to the hearer. We quote from Isaiah 50:4, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary:...he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." This prophecy especially concerns Jesus, but I believe that the same spirit of God has the same effect upon God's called ministers. God blesses his ministers with the tongue of the learned to comfort and edify the wearied. The Psalmist prayed, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee" (Psalm 51:12-13). When it pleases God to restore the joy of that salvation to one of his ministers, and blesses him with light of thought and liberty of speech; the result is that the minister is blessed to teach sinners God's ways. God's way of being merciful to their unrighteousness and his way of saving sinners by the merits of Jesus Christ, solely unmerited by the sinner, is comforting and edifying to such sinners that God pleases to waken his ear to hear. The result of the operation of God's spirit upon the ministers and the hearers is the conversion of sinners. According to Paul's letter to Timothy a qualification of a minister is "apt to teach." I think it is just as certain that some one learns as it is that some one preaches. I do not think words inspired by the spirit are spoken in vain but they find good ground in some heart that God has prepared. God's children are converted day by day thus growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I believe God's called ministers are blessed to comfort, console and edify. It is their desire to do this rather than to establish some peculiar point in theology of their own conviction that is not believed by the brethren. Their desire

is, “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.” Their desire is to please the Lord, not to offend any one. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “Except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air” (1 Cor. 14:9). If we use words that the meaning of the terms is controversial among the brethren I would consider them not easy to be understood. Many times expressions are misunderstood among brethren because of difference of opinion concerning particular definitions of words used in these expressions. It behooves us to refrain from using expressions that tend to cause controversy among brethren. It is our desire to heed Paul’s instructions to Timothy to wit: “Of these things put them, in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker” (2 Timothy 2:14-17). Paul gives an illustration in the next verse of an expression of vain and profane babbling thus, “the resurrection is past already.” Expressions as follows are misunderstood, thus misleading among the brethren; “God is the author of sin,” “God predestinated sin and wickedness,” “We will know each other there,” “This same body ‘will’ be raised from the dead,” “I believe, in eternal children,” and “The creature is not changed in the new birth.” Difference of opinions on the words, “author,” “predestinated,” “know,” “same body,” “eternal children” and “creature” make these expressions and many others not easy to be understood. “Foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in

meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (2 Timothy 2:23-25). I think the traits of patience, gentleness and meekness are made manifest in God's called ministers. I have received more comfort from wrong expressions in the spirit of meekness than right expressions that are motivated by a haughty spirit. Before we accuse brethren of departing from the doctrine let us first be convinced that we understand their position, and that their position is decidedly contrary to the words that are upright and words of truth. In meditating upon the aforestated thoughts ye are mindful to pray to God that he bless us not to know anything among God's people save Jesus Christ and him crucified. As Peter said to Christ at one time, "Thou hast the words of eternal life." His words were, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." So when we are blessed to speak words of truth, we are blessed to preach Jesus as our Savior. We trust that he speaks these words to us when we are troubled, which results in sweet consolation and confidence in God who saves to the uttermost by his amazing grace. Signs of the Times, Vol. 115, No.10, October 1947

PRAYER

January, 1948 One subject of vital importance to the child of God is prayer. True prayer is a sincere desire of the heart prompted by the Holy Spirit. One prays sincerely for that to be done for him that he has learned by sad experience that he cannot perform himself. When you are brought down to feel your dependence and inability and you are sinking in despair, and God reveals himself to you as being willing to save to the uttermost; you are then blessed to pray.

Hypocritical prayer would be an attempt to ask God to do something for you that you feel able to perform of your own strength, or to ask for something you do not believe he will perform. I believe all true prayer inspired by the Holy Spirit is answered. The promise is, “Ask, and ye shall receive.” Many times we ask in vain, but this is because our desire is prompted by a selfish spirit. We are so ignorant that we do not know the things we stand in need of, but our heavenly Father knows and the spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. When we realize our infirmities we pray God to do according to his will and to reconcile us to our lot in the matter. Sometimes tribulations are best for us even though we may feel they are against us. Afflictions are grievous to us while being experienced but afterwards yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to God’s people. Then we are made to “glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed: because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.” I believe all the disciples of Christ pray the prayer Jesus taught his disciples to pray in full faith that every syllable will be answered. They may not utter the words but when that Spirit intercedes they desire the essence of it and are confident of it being answered. Now let us examine this prayer. “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.” In the salutation we acknowledge him as being supreme. Those who have been blessed to believe Jesus is the Christ is born of God. That Spirit in us makes us cry “Father.” What a wonderful relationship to be enabled by his Spirit to feel that we are his children. We realize his name is to be hallowed rather than ours. No one who feels to deserve any credit or praise whatsoever can pray for God’s name to be praised. Yes, all things praise him. Even the wrath of man shall praise him. The things that would not be to his praise God will prevent.

“Thy kingdom come.” We do not pray for our kingdom, but we pray for his kingdom to come. There is a king who reigns over the subjects of a kingdom. God is king of this kingdom. He is the supreme ruler. When he speaks it is done. When he commands it stands fast. The words that go forth out of his mouth shall not return unto him void but shall accomplish that which he pleases and prosper in the thing whereto he sends it. This King spake through his Son concerning this kingdom when he said, “Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” There is a kingdom of men and there is a kingdom of God. The kingdom of men is built by men and will come to naught but the sole builder of God’s kingdom is the LORD and it will stand. Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the LORD keep the city the watchman waketh but in vain. God’s people are confident that his kingdom will not fail for he is the builder and the keeper and he makes his subjects obedient. He has the power to make them willing and enables them to perform. Tried In The Furnace 51 “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” According to the scripture, “He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” He “worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” Yes, he has declared “the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” God’s children are consoled with the fact that God rules over all things and the devil with all of his hosts cannot frustrate nor interfere with God’s will and purpose. Those things that men and devils ordain for the ruin and destruction of that peculiar people of God, God has ordained them for the good of his people and for the ruin and destruction of men and devils. “Give us this day our daily bread.” If we feel competent to acquire this bread by the work of our own hands it would be

hypocritical to ask him for it. If we felt to deserve this bread we could only ask him to reward us with it. But our feeling of unworthiness as well as our inability prompts us to ask him to GIVE us this day our daily bread. Our confidence, that he will never forsake his children but will give unto them daily the things they stand in need of, suffices us with faith to believe that he will administer unto our needs. God is not only mindful of our spiritual needs but is also mindful of our temporal needs. When treating upon the natural necessities of 1ife Jesus said to his disciples, "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you." Luke 12:31. God will provide his people sufficiently with the natural necessities of life as well as the Spiritual bread which is Christ and his righteousness in them. "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." According to Luke the wording is, "And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." God's children realize that they are transgressors of the law. They are made to exclaim, "when I would do good, evil is present with me." They realize that with the mind they "serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." We are made to acknowledge our sins. Faith and trust in the merits of Jesus Christ and in the sufficiency of the atoning blood of Jesus to pay the penalty imposed because of our sins and to satisfy justice, emboldens us to believe that God will forgive us our sins. The people of God are blessed with a forgiving heart. God has taken from us the stony heart and has given us a heart of flesh. This heart forgives a brother his trespasses. One characteristic of a child of God is to forgive. Jesus said, "Cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye." The fact that you can behold a mote in your brother's eye makes manifest that you have a beam in your own. If God has forgiven me of so great sins how shall I not forgive a brother his trespasses seeing that they are so little and

insignificant in comparison with my sins. “Lead us not into temptation.” James says, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away from his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” God does not lead his people into temptation. It is the agreement of the man with the lustly desires of the flesh that produces sin. It is the enticement of the lust which is the temptation. “But deliver us from evil.” When we would do good evil is present with us. This causes us to desire to be delivered from evil. Because of our many infirmities we are made to cry out as Paul, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Our trust in the efficacy of the merits of Jesus Christ enables us to thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Evil is present with us yet, but we hope some day to be delivered from it. We trust that when this mortal shall have put on immortality and when this corruptible shall have put on in corruption then we shall have been delivered from evil. When this natural body shall have been raised a Spiritual body then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” I believe it pleases God to deliver us from evil continually in this present life but the climax of that deliverance will be the resurrection. “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.” In closing this prayer we acknowledge that the kingdom belongs to him. We grant that he has all power to enforce his decrees concerning this kingdom. At last we think of him as eternal. He is ever the same and changes not. The subjects of his kingdom will finally abide with him forever and ever on the sunny banks of sweet deliverance where no one hungers for bread, no sin shall be there; no other kingdom to contend

with, and no evils to molest a life of joy, peace and happiness. Signs of the Times, Vol. 116, No. 1, January 1948

A FIRM FOUNDATION

"Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars." THE ABOVE scripture is found in the ninth chapter of Proverbs and if you will read the entire chapter you will find that two houses were under consideration. One house was the product of wisdom, and the other house was of the foolish woman. I think wisdom's house is figurative of the Church of Christ, and the other represents the false church. All has been done to make the Church of Christ secure and firm, but the foolish will fall by the wayside. I believe this house to be composed of all the children of God as chosen in Christ before the world began. It is not our desire to consider the house at this time, but to consider the foundation upon which this house is built. Surely the foundation is Christ Jesus and all who were chosen in Him will finally be blessed to view the seven pillars or principles of the doctrine of God, our Savior. The abstract of the faith of God's elect may be summed up thus: (1) Sovereignty of God. (2) Total depravity of man. (3) Unconditional Election. (4) Limited atonement or special redemption. (5) Irresistible or efficacious grace. (6) Preservation of the saints. (7) Resurrection or complete immortalization of the saints. I believe these phases of the doctrine are experienced in the order named. The first six are experienced here in time and the seventh is to be experienced in the beyond. (1) The first lesson to be revealed to the child of God is His sovereignty. We are thinking in terms of seven so we think of God as eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, holy, living and triune. Yes, He is eternal. One day is with the Lord as a

thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. He is of one mind. He has never learned anything new nor has He forgotten anything. Everything that has ever taken place, is taking place, or that ever will come to pass is just as present and vivid in His mind as if it were (at this very moment) taking place. Things that we experience are past, present and future with us because we are creatures of time and finite, but all things are as present with God. We wonder what the future holds for us and forget things that are past, but God being eternal sees it as now transpiring. The second part of the first pillar of this firm foundation is the omnipotence of God. He is all-powerful. God says through the prophet, "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from the ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass." In the Scriptures it is said of God; "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" God spake this world into existence. He only had to say, "Let there be light: and there was light." "As I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand." He is God "who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." God is omniscient. He is wise to the extent that His knowledge embraces all things because He has decreed them and is abundantly able to bring them to pass. There is not a thought or act of man that God does not know about. "He is before all things, and by him all things consist." Though the world seems to run at random, and events huddled together in blind confusion to our finite minds, God is so wise that He knows the outcome of all causes and effects, and so governs them that He makes perfect harmony out of all those seeming jarrings and discords, He is so wise

that all things praise Him. God is omnipresent. He is present at all places at the same time. He is at all times at the same place. There is no possibility of hiding from God. In Him we live, move and have our being. He fills the universe. Another characteristic of God is His eternal love. God is love. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." He loved His people even when they were dead in trespasses and in sin. This love of God is the basis of their salvation. It is the characteristic that is planted in the hearts of God's people by the Holy Spirit. God is holy. "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works" (Psalm 145:17). There is no unrighteousness with God. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look upon iniquity, therefore He consecrates the wicked acts of men to His own glory and praise to the good of His chosen people. The seventh phase of His sovereignty is that He is triune. God, the Father; God the Son; and God, the Holy Ghost. God the Father, chose His people unto salvation before the foundation of the world. God, the Son, accomplished this salvation by performing the requirements of the law, and suffered the penalty of sin and satisfied justice by shedding His precious blood on Calvary's tree for the remission of their many sins. God, the Holy Ghost, operates upon them here in time by taking from them the stony heart and giving them a heart of flesh; reveals to them the truth as it is in Christ Jesus; comforts and consoles them in this life; and will (in the resurrection) baptize them with immortality. (2) Now let us consider the second pillar of this firm foundation. According to my experience, I was given a glimpse of the sovereignty of God. This was the stimuli that made manifest the fundamental truth of the total depravity of man. Job had a similar experience as recorded in Job 42:5-6, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Isaiah speaks likewise in Isaiah

6:5. “Then said I, woe is me for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” God, first, revealed Himself to each of these causing them, secondly, to see their depravity. What a contrast! God is eternal; I am timely. God is all-powerful; I have no ability. God is all-wise; I know nothing as God knows. God is everywhere at all times; I can be nowhere at any time upon volition of my own will, for I find myself a victim of circumstances over which I have no control. God loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sin; I naturally love no one by myself. God is holy; I am unholy. God is triune in complete agreement; my natural desires war against the Spirit. I find myself totally depraved, not able to extricate myself from this terrible state. This experience agrees with Jer. 13:23, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” Jesus expressed this incapacity of man to recover himself from this fallen state he is in when He said as recorded in John 6:44, “No man can come unto me, except the Father draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” As long as the skin of the Ethiopian is black and the leopard is spotted there is no reason to expect goodness to spring from man. It is just as possible for the Ethiopian to change his skin or the leopard its spots. We must look to some other source than ourselves for anything good. We are so naturally constituted that we will trust in our own ability until God sees fit to reveal to us our true condition by His Spirit. Then we are made to “cry unto God, the most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.” In this state of mind it is with pleasure and heart-felt thanks to God that we view the third pillar of this firm foundation, unconditional election. (3) “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). Paul trusted in the power and amazing grace of God as stated in his letter to Timothy, 2 Timothy 1:9, “Who hath saved us, and called us

with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Thus, it is not according to our works. Our finite minds would argue that surely it is according to our works. The Spirit teaches us contrary to natural reasoning so let us see what Paul has to say about it in Rom. 9:11- 18. "(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharoah, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." Jesus said to His disciples, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." So we are unconditionally elected according to the good pleasure of God's will. (4) Let us further view this foundation by noting the fourth pillar or principle of truth, limited atonement. God's people were chosen in Christ Jesus. Christ's life and death must have been for them only. Concerning Jesus before His birth the angel said, "And she (Mary) shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." The work of Christ was for God's people, not for the entire Adamic race. Christ said in John 10:14-15, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep." Christ died for the

sheep, not for the goats. Christ said in His prayer to God as recorded in John 17:9, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." Christ did not pray for the entire Adamic race. Paul tells the ministers of Ephesus in Acts 20:28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." His blood was shed for the church, not for the world. Christ said in Matt. 20:28, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." He gave His life for many, not for all. (5) The fifth pillar is that of irresistible or efficacious grace. The teachings of the Scriptures is such that we must say that man in his natural state is radically corrupt. He is spiritually dead and must be saved by Christ if at all. He does not desire God; therefore, must have a new disposition before he can love God. He loves sin, therefore can never desire to be redeemed from it until he is wrought upon by the effectual working of God's mighty power. Jesus said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). This inward change wrought by supernatural power is termed in the Scriptures as "Called out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). A passing out of death unto life (John 5:24); a taking away of the heart of stone, and a giving of the heart of flesh (Ezek. 11:19); and the subject of the change is said to be a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17). We had nothing to do with our physical birth but received it as a sovereign gift of God; we likewise have nothing to do with our spiritual birth but receive it also as a sovereign gift. Each occurred without any exercise of our own power, and even without our consent being asked. We no more resist the latter than we did the former. Consequently, salvation to whomsoever it may be granted is to see "Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). There is no such thing

as a “self-made man”; the highest type man agrees with Paul, “By the grace of God I am what I am.” God said through the prophet, Isaiah 56:11, “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth, it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it.” When God says repent, you repent; when He says come, you come; when He says go, you go. (6) The doctrine of election and efficacious grace logically implies the certain salvation of those who receive these blessings. Therefore let us consider the sixth pillar, to with: the perseverance of the saints. Those who have been brought to Jesus for refuge have a firm foundation upon which to build their hope of eternal life. The iniquities of their own hearts together with all the Satanic influences will never cause them to fail. The same amazing grace that has brought us thus far will lead us home. Paul said in Rom. 8:29, “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” It is an evidence that God has predestinated the recipients of these gifts to be like Him in character, destiny and glory and that He will infallibly carry out His purpose. “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6). This day of Jesus Christ will be the crowning work of immortality in the resurrection. Psalm 138:8 reads, “The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever.” Paul states that “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” So God’s dealings with His children are never ending, but will finally save them in heaven without the loss of one. (7) In this life God’s people may experience a close view of the six fundamental principles or pillars of this firm foundation as God sees fit to reveal to them, but the seventh, or that of the immortalization or resurrection of the saints, is yet to be experienced in reality. Now we see as

through a glass darkly but then face to face; now we know in part but then we will know as we are known. Now we look forward with deep anxiety and precious hope toward the reality of the seventh principle, the resurrection, which is to be the crowing work of salvation and is yet to be experienced actually and really by all the children of God. I desire to close this treatise by quoting 1 Cor. 15:51-58, "Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O, grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." Amen.

TAKE HEED TO YOURSELF

April, 1949 "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." – Acts 20:28 Paul had called all the elders of the church at Ephesus together to give them his last instructions before he took his departure to Jerusalem. He was aware that he would not see all of them again face-to-face so he was burdened of the Spirit to exhort

them with spiritual instructions. He was prompted of the Spirit to warn them of the trials and persecutions that lay in store for them. He must also tell them that even some of them would rise up speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. In Acts 20:17-35 is recorded the full text of Paul's words to the elders of Ephesus in that meeting at that time. As these were appropriate words spoken to the elders of the church by Paul at that time of strife and confusion that was beginning to be made manifest in the church at that time, I believe they are just as appropriate to the elders of the church in this country at this time. This same exhortation and instruction is necessary to the elders for the welfare of Zion today. When elders are blessed to obey these instructions Zion is not troubled. When elders take heed unto other elders to watch them and take a great interest in other flocks to dictate to them to the extent of not being mindful of their own condition nor the flock of their pastorate, Zion is troubled. Paul said to the elders at Ephesus, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves." He said to Timothy, "Take heed unto thyself" (1 Tim. 4:16). Just before he said this to Timothy, he had enumerated some of the things Timothy was to watch concerning himself. He told Timothy, "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." I am persuaded that elders will have plenty to occupy their minds and time to take cognizance of their walk and conversation without meddling into the affairs and critically watching the walks of others. Paul further added, "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all." I am quoting to you some of the things that daily confront me. Do I manifest an humble or proud spirit? Do I believe in God's promises or do

I just say I do? Do I realize the exceeding sinfulness and vileness of my sins or do I just take them for granted justifying myself because of my weakness? Do I seek those things that are pure and from above or do I mind earthly things? Do I desire to live more godly and think more upon spiritual things or am I satisfied with my activities and thoughts as they are? Do I read the Bible and writings of the saints of God as much as I ought or am I satisfied with the puny knowledge that I now have? Do I exhort when I feel impressed to do so or am I afraid I will be dubbed as a Conditionalist if I speak anything pertaining to duty and righteous living in this life? Do I speak the words that are well-pleasing to God or am I seeking to please men? Do I press toward the mark of the prize of the high-calling in Christ Jesus or am I content to drift along the path of least resistance? All these questions and many more come into my mind daily to condemn me which causes me to cry unto my God for His amazing grace to sustain me and keep me from falling! Paul told Timothy to "neglect not the gift that is in thee." May I say to the elders of the church of this time that God hath wondrously blessed you with a precious gift that has been so recognized by the church that you were brought under the hands of a presbytery and ordained to the officeship of an elder as a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. Shun profane and vain babblings; for they will increase unto more ungodliness. Paul says if a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work. Flee also youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace with them that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. How carefully we ought to conduct ourselves as we sojourn here in this unfriendly world. This gift is sacred; our ordination is no light thing; and the confidence our brethren have in us as being vessels of honor is precious. The doctrine we are blessed to preach is God-honoring. Are our acts and

conversation God-honoring? I am persuaded that if our acts and conversation in everyday living are lustful and ungodly, our preaching is hypocritical and vain. Your words from the pulpit may be in accord with the words spoken by the inspired writers and speakers, but if your life does not manifest the fruit of the Spirit, what evidence do brethren have that you have experienced the grace of God in your heart? When brethren have so much confidence in the operation of God's Holy Spirit in your heart that they receive you into their fellowship embracing you in that precious faith; and, that confidence mounts higher to the extent of calling for your ordination as a minister of Jesus Christ; and, then you betray that confidence by ungodly conversation and lustful living, how great is their grief and hurt! It were better that a millstone be hanged about your neck and you drowned in the sea than to offend these little ones! May God give us grace to neglect not the gift that is in us and to enable us by His Spirit to take heed unto ourselves. May He enable us to watch our deportment and to profit by our mistakes. Paul further adds: "And to all the flock." One who is called to the officeship of an elder is instructed to take heed unto all the trophy of his grace. A true elder has the interest of the lambs as well as the sheep in mind. He is tender and patient in his dealings with them for fear of wounding one of the little lambs. He is just as anxious for the welfare of the insignificant and timid ones as he is of the bolder and more prominent ones. He does not devote his time and attention to just a few to the exclusion of others, but watches over the entire flock to shield each and every one of them. He is not to take heed to another outside of his jurisdiction. He is not to consider the goats to please them nor to score them, but his interest is to be confined to the flock. I do not believe that a God-called elder has any time to waste outside of the flock skinning goats or petting them. May God enable us to stay within our calling being attentive to all the flock. "Over

the which the Holy Ghost made thee overseers." Elders do not fill this place upon their own volition. They have not fitted themselves for this place by their own activities. Others have not called them into this noble position. Schools of men have not prepared them as overseers. The Holy Ghost is the agency that God has used in making them overseers of the flock. True elders are ordained by the Holy Ghost and this ordination is assented to by the laying on of the hands of a presbytery. This officeship was given you by the Holy Ghost. No man or group of men is able to ordain one to such a high position. No school or university is able to qualify one and place him in such high position. If this position is given us by virtue of the Holy Ghost what a high and exalted calling it is! I am persuaded that the position of elder in the church is much more to be coveted than that of the officeship of President of the United States. People may elect presidents but it requires the election of God for a person to serve as a true elder. How thankful we ought to be that God has chosen us to this high and exalted position to be counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake! "To feed the church of God." We are not left to guess or speculate upon the purposes of elders or to the extent of their work. Paul is very specific in this. We are not to dabble with anything or anyone outside the church of God under the cloak of an elder. I think it is unbecoming for elders to use the cloak of a minister of the Lord to gain worldly gain or to pursue some political venture. They are not to preach to the world for the world will not hear them. They are not to bring sheep into the fold for that is the work of Christ. They are not to add them to the church for that is the work of the Lord. They are to feed the church of God. They are not to prepare the food for that is the work of Wisdom. Yes, they are to read and study but not to think what they shall say, for it is given them by the Holy Spirit in the selfsame hour that it becomes them to speak. As all the writing of the saints, as recorded in the Bible, were

addressed to God's children or the church, so all the preaching and writing of the elders should be addressed to the children of God or to the church of God. I do not believe this church of God under consideration is any organization in its entirety, that it is visible here in this world to the exclusion of all outside the visible organization; but I do believe this church to be the invisible, complete kingdom of Jesus Christ including all the children of God. I believe many members of this church are not members of any organization here upon this earth as the organized church are members of this church that Paul had under consideration as he defines it in the remaining words of our text. "Which he hath purchased with his own blood." All of whom Christ died are members of this church under consideration. Your efforts nor the efforts of any other ordained elder has added any one or excluded any one from this church that Christ purchased with His blood. Christ did not try to purchase the whole Adamic world but He did purchase the church. God's called elders preach the efficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ in atoning for all the sins of all the members of this church. The doctrine of Christ includes limited atonement and special redemption with efficacious grace being applied continuously to the objects of His grace until the complete and ultimate salvation shall have been experienced by each and every member of this church. What great price was paid for your redemption. My sins and your sins, if we be members of that church, caused the Holy One to suffer, bleed and die on Calvary's tree that we might be freed from sin! If Christ suffered, was forsaken and died for us, is it a great thing that we should suffer persecution here in this world? If Christ devoted His entire life to the service of others and was not even provided with a place to lay His head–as were the foxes and birds–is it a great thing that we should devote some time to the service of others, and not be blessed with some of the luxuries of this world? May I conclude this script by stating that I have

no apologies to give for the things that I have written in this epistle as I have been somewhat burdened along this line of thought. I have no person or persons in mind to profit from this other than myself. I stand condemned and guilty of treating the officeship of elder very lightly. I have been so concerned over my unconcernedness of late that I am made daily to cry to God for mercy. I have written this in the fear of God and not to please men. May God awake us from our cold state and bless us by His grace to earnestly contend for that precious faith. May He stir up our pure minds and enable us to walk and talk as we ought while we are in this earthly tabernacle of clay awaiting to be clothed upon with immortality when this life is over that we may be received into that heavenly clime where all will be perfect forever, Amen. Signs of the Times, Vol. 162, No. 7, July 1994

PREPARATIONS OF THE HEART AND TONGUE

September, 1949 "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord. All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits." Prov. 16:1-2. The Natural Man who is born of natural parents, who is not yet born of the Spirit, reasons that all of his own ways are clean. He is confident that his walk is more righteous than his fellow man. He is certain that he knows right from wrong, and that he is capable of choosing and pursuing the right course in this life. He glories in the idea that he can direct his own steps, prepare his own heart, and choose his own destiny. He justifies himself in every act he performs. All of his ambitions are motivated by selfish desires. He loves himself and strives to prove to his fellow-man that he is superior. Any ideas contrary to these ideas are foolishness unto him and he will not receive them as truth. The Bible contains many plain statements that are contrary to the ideas conceived by a natural man. I desire to

quote just a few of these statements: “Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God” – (Jesus). “Are we better than they? No, in no wise” – (Paul). “There is none that doeth good, no not one” – (Paul). “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” – (Jesus). “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” – (Jeremiah). “A man’s heart deviseth his way but the Lord directeth his steps” – (Solomon). “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord” – (Psalms). “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you” – (Jesus). “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” – (Paul). “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” – (Paul). “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” – (Paul). Considering the things that are written above, we realize the necessity of the direct operation of God’s Holy Spirit in the heart of man in order for him to receive these things as true. No wonder that Jesus said, “Ye must be born again”. There must be a change of heart before the natural man can receive the things of the Spirit. This changed heart must further be prepared by the Lord. The Lord does not stop with just one preparation but it is a progressive work requiring several preparations. “The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord.” We would like to consider some of these preparations. Let us read from Ezekiel 11:19-20 concerning the first preparation of the heart in man that is done, solely, by the work of God Himself. “I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.” Many years ago, I begged people to give

their hearts to God. I honestly thought that each human being was in possession of a heart that was sufficient as a sacrifice and worthy of acceptance with God. I thought we were capable of doing things for Him. Alas! I did not know Him; neither did I know my wicked and ungodly heart that I possessed! If it were possible for a man, upon the volition of his own will, to give his heart to God, what value would it be to God considering the wickedness of the natural heart of man? There is no scripture that intimates that the stony heart of man would be worthy of God's acceptance. God takes this old heart from man and gives him a new heart. There is heart-giving in the act of regeneration, but instead of the sinner giving his heart to God, God is giving the sinner a new heart. God is successful in this operation and has never lost a case. When we are on the operating table of God's amazing grace, and He is performing that wonderful operation, we are in close touch with him. He is near unto us and may be found. We behold Him as all powerful, all wise, and most holy. It is while we are in this position that the scripture is applicable unto us which says, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." This first preparation of the heart in man humbles him and gives him a desire for godliness. God does not stop in His preparations, for we read in Psalm 10:17, "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble; thou wilt prepare their heart." This initial operation has awakened the creature to his unworthiness, wretchedness and inability. As a new born babe it causes him to cry. He is crying unto the Lord to further prepare him. Let us read from Jeremiah 31:33, concerning further preparation of the new heart God has given His children: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." Paul explains to the Corinthian brethren further concerning this writing as he says, "Written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of

stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart" (2 Cor. 2:3). The creature with the new heart is not dependent upon the study of the Scriptures to know the Lord or the law of the Lord. This knowledge is indelibly impressed by the direct operation of God's Holy Spirit. The Scriptures were not written to incite us to our duty but, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." The scriptures, "Seek, and ye shall find"; "Knock, and It shall be opened unto you"; "Ask, and It shall be given you"; were not written in order to exhort you to seek, ask, and knock, for this is done by the Holy Spirit, but to comfort you with the thought of the results of this asking, knocking and seeking. The command, "Love one another" is written in your hearts for Paul says, "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (1 Thess. 4:9). We quote from Christ's sermon on the mount to His disciples according to Matt. 7:12, "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." Jesus said again as recorded in Mat 22:37-40, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hangs all the law and the prophets." These are so indelibly impressed in the heart of each of God's children that "His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:2). The child of God would perform it to a jot and tittle but realizes the infirmities of the flesh, and the thorn in the flesh so that he cannot do the things that he would. Paul said, "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin." This knowledge can only be experienced by those to whom it has pleased God to reveal the holiness of His law and the

unholiness of man. All our righteousness appears as filthy rags when compared to the standard of that written law that has been so indelibly imprinted in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We witness further with Paul when he said, "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that I do not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." (Read Romans seventh chapter.) The heart is now well prepared for another preparation which we shall consider. The failure to comply with this law causes such grief and sorrow until we are without hope. Hungering and thirsting for righteousness that we cannot perform causes our souls to faint within us. We realize that the law is just and holy and that if we offend in one point we are guilty of the whole. We are made to exclaim with Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" We have lost all confidence in ourselves and cannot any more depend upon the puny arm of flesh to save us. Christ comes to us in this distressed condition and takes up His abode in our hearts. We now quote from 2 Cor. 6:16, "As God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." This is the opportune time that Jesus says, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Jesus comes to us in the day of adversity and speaks sweet peace to our troubled souls! He tells us that He has brought us out from under the dominion of the law by keeping it in our stead to a jot and tittle, and that His obedience is accredited to our account. He informs us that He took our sins upon His shoulders and that they were nailed to the cross; that our sins were charged to Him; and that He satisfied justice by paying the penalty with His own blood on the cross of Calvary. He has stripped us of the filthy rags of our own

righteousness and clothed us with the robe of His righteousness. He intercedes to the Father for us and blesses us with His great love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. He not only accomplished the law for us and paid the penalty for our sins; but, also gives unto us eternal life. "And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:11-12). We hear Jesus saying to the Father as recorded in John 17:22-23, "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." Last December while everyone was celebrating Christmas in the customary manner of modern frivolity, I was very much concerned about the right way and right time to celebrate such an occasion. While I was so perplexed my nearest neighbor, who is clerk of Bethel Primitive Church here in this community, asked me if I knew when God's children celebrated the birth of Christ. Feeling that he has an appropriate answer I asked him to answer his own question. I want to pass his answer along to you and see if it does not fit in your experience as it did in mine. His answer was, "God's children truly celebrate Christmas when Christ is born in them." Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Jesus told His disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you." He terms the Spirit of Truth as the Comforter. It soothes our troubled souls, heals our broken hearts, guides us into all truth, and glorifies Christ. This spirit dwells in us as Paul states in I Cor. 3:16, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" If so be that the Lord has taken from you the stony heart and has given you a new heart, has written His laws In your heart and imprinted them in your mind; and Jesus has come to your rescue as your

Savior; and the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, has taken up His abode in your heart; you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit. Your heart has been prepared to receive and be comforted by the following quotation: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear: but ye have received the Spirit of adoption" (Rom. 8:15). Space will not permit us to consider the various minute preparations of the heart in man that are from the Lord as affirmed by the Scriptures. Let us now take up briefly, "The answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." Paul said in Rom. 10:9-11, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." God causes us to not be ashamed to own Him as our Lord. We do not have to be prompted by man to confess Him as our Savior for the Lord so blesses us. "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he put a new song In my mouth, even praise unto our God" (Psalms 40:2-3). God has put this new song into the mouth of His children, and I am persuaded that they sing it. They render praise unto God for all things. They realize that it is solely by the grace of God that they are saved both in time and for eternity. "No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:20-21). God has never changed in His way of dealing with His children. I believe that it is just as true now that confession is made unto salvation by the promptings of the Holy Ghost as it has ever been. I do

not believe it is in the province of natural man void of the Holy Spirit to even confess with the mouth. He may make statements that favors a true confession but I am persuaded his language will betray him. It is natural for a man to want to take some of the praise unto himself and regardless of how much he may try to imitate the speech of a child of God, he will fall far short of speaking in this new tongue. In Luke 12:12 we find this statement, "For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." God is perfect in His work and does not only prepare our hearts but also gives the answer of the tongue. He does not depend upon us to search out what we shall say in advance, but relieves us by putting the words in our mouths by the direct operation of His Spirit at the time we shall say them. I am impressed that I have experienced that very thing in speaking publicly from the pulpit. At times words flow so fluently without any labor upon my part that I feel to know that it is the work of God. I have been blessed to speak upon texts upon which I have not had previous meditation, with all ease and so true to scriptural teachings that it astonished me when I would be given to compare the things that I had said with the scriptures later. Prior to becoming affiliated with the Primitive Baptists I outlined the sermons beforehand and tried to deliver them in accordance. Now I study and outline them after they have been delivered. I trust that I have been made to believe in the effectual working of God's mighty power which is far superior to the wisdom of this world. I have only hinted at this far reaching subject but now must submit it for your consideration. May God bless it to your comfort and be pleased to further prepare our hearts and give us the answer of the tongue as it pleases Him. Signs of the Times, Vol. 162, No. 8, August 1994

AS AN EAGLE

January, 1950 "As an eagle stirreth up her nest; fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." – Deut. 32:11-12 Elder Williams of Decatur, Mississippi, has requested views on this scripture. May God bless us with light of thought and liberty of expression to comfort God's little children with some thoughts on the wonderful care God exercises upon His own. We enter into the discussion of this Scripture with a deep felt sense of inability. We fully realize our dependence upon God to stir us up at this time to properly meditate upon this Scripture. Jacob, who is the "lot of his inheritance", is the object of these expressions. As God dealt with Jacob, He deals with each and every one of His children. Read the context and you will find that Jacob was passive in the hands of a merciful God. It was God who found him; it was God who led him about; it was God who instructed him; it was God who kept him; and it was God who made him ride on the high places of the earth. Jacob could not claim any credit for anything, but must bow to God and realize that it was by God's mercies that he was so wonderfully delivered. In this text God is likened to an eagle in some of His dealings. The kings of Assyria, Egypt and Babylon were likened unto eagles for their power and dominion. The Chaldean armies were likened unto eagles because of their swiftness. The Edomites exalted themselves and made their nests high as the eagles. It is said that the eagle builds its nest in high places in the tops of the rocks –in the highest rocks which no man can reach. Of course the outer part of the nest is constructed with rough, jagged, course and thorny material. The innermost part is lined with smooth, soft matter that affords the eaglets a place of sweet repose. This is certainly a

comfortable place of refuge until the nest is stirred up. The soft down that interlines the eagle's nest typifies the seeming righteousness of the flesh and the confidence that the unregenerated child of God has in his own cleanness and ability. He is content with himself and with his place of abode. He is at ease and does not care to venture from this sweet place of self-righteousness and carnal affections. ''All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes." As the eagle stirs up this soft nest and makes it a bed of thorns to the eaglets, so the Lord stirs up the souls of His people, and makes bare the thorn in the flesh so that their place of sweet repose becomes a miserable place of abode. When God begins His work there is a stirring in the soul that nothing can still, silence, quench or quell. When this begins with you, you become very greatly alarmed and anxious. This anxiety becomes so miserable that you try to rid yourself of this condition by your own activity. You become just as restless as the eaglets with the same results – the thorns prick you more every turn you make. You are pricked in the heart as those spoken of in Acts 2:37. As the God of Israel stirred up the spirits of the kings of Assyria and prompted them to action, He awakens and disturbs you and causes you to become much concerned over your miserable condition. Have you ever been awakened to the fact that you are a sinner? Have you made resolutions to better that condition? Have you tried to deliver yourself and found that all your trials availed nothing? Have you been shown that all your righteousness is as filthy rags in God's sight? Have you lost confidence in your own self? Has there been a time that your soul fainted in you and you had no hope in this world or that to come? If you can answer the above questions in the affirmative, (I am persuaded) God has stirred up your nest and has fluttered over you. You have been shaken from that nest and you are falling toward the abyss below. What a fear accompanies this fall! You have nothing to rely upon! You

fear the consequences of the jagged rocks and the abyss below which surely means sudden destruction to you! I experienced this falling for many miserable months. I could see nothing before me but this blackness of darkness forever. I was afraid to live and afraid to die. I cried in anguish of soul, “Woe is me! for I am undone!” As the eagle watches the young eaglet as it falls toward the abyss below, I trust that God was watching me. As the eagle swoops down beneath the falling eaglet, “Spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings,” I feel that God so dealt with me. What a glad surprise when He came to my rescue! The thought that God watches us and protects us before regeneration brings to mind that He was the God of Jacob. Jacob is the unregenerate name of Israel. Who is this God of Jacob? The God that gave him the blessing of the birthright though he was a junior; the God that delivered him from the murderous hand of his brother in the day of trouble; the God that protected him and manifested Himself to him; his covenant God. God sometimes says, I am the God of Jacob. This means I am your God before regeneration, as well as after when you attempt to supplant me with proud free-will and blunt my sovereignty with your rebellion; when you took my covenant name in a covenant character, I am your God still. Yes, it was a day of rejoicing when God came to your rescue to prevent you from being utterly destroyed by the jagged rocks and the abyss beneath. He rescued you on His wings of love. He whispered to you, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.” He informed you that He was a merciful and gracious God. He restored your soul. Jesus informed you that He had fulfilled the law to a jot and tittle for you. He told you that He had taken your sins upon His own shoulder and had paid the penalty, satisfied justice by shedding His own blood for the remission of sins and had died in your stead. He spoke sweet peace to your soul that He had wrought out

eternal salvation for you. He put a new song in your mouth that praised God and confessed Jesus as your Savior. You are resting in the sweet embrace of His love. Your soul is absorbed in this experience. You are blessed to exclaim, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." You can say with one of old, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." You feel that your worries and fears are in the past and that you will ride forever upon His wings. You can see the Father, Son and Holy Ghost enacting, determining and covenanting for, and mutually swearing each to each for the accomplishment of your salvation. Did this sweet experience continue? No, if your experience coincides with my experience, it did not continue. It was of short duration. After the eagle rescues the young and bears them comfortably upon her wings for awhile, she tilts her wings and permits them to fall again toward the abyss below. Did God deal with you as the eagle deals with her young? While you were riding joyfully, upon His everlasting love and sweet promises, all was well with your soul. You said, "my God reigneth," and "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Then, all at once, you realized that you were again falling toward destruction. The sweet embrace of that love was gone. Your former experience taught you that there was One who did rescue you, but, would He rescue again? You looked for Him but you could not find Him. You sincerely asked, "Will the Lord cast off forever? and will He be favorable no more? Is His mercy clean gone forever? Doth His promise fail forevermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies? (Psalm 77:7-9.) You are falling down, down, down! You yet have a faint hope that almost vanishes away. Just before you would die in despair, God rescues you again from destruction. The wings of God's mercy and love comes underneath you and raises you up, and soars high above the cares and troubles of this world,

and you again rejoice because of His amazing grace that can descend low enough to prevent you from dashing your head against a stone. It is our lot to be shaken many times from the wings of God's manifest love and mercy, but He yet cares for us and carefully watches over us. It is necessary that we be taught again and again of our infirmities and weakness in the flesh and our total dependence upon Him. We are made to cry out so often to Him to be merciful to our unrighteousness. We shall have tribulations and suffer trials and afflictions here in this world, and to realize that, "here have we no continuing city." These joyful experiences are not continuous but are mixtures of joy and sorrow. We trust that the grace of God enables us to "Press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). At the time when He shall take us upon His wings it will be forever. All will be joyful forevermore. No more trials and tribulations. No more heartaches nor fear of falling into utter destruction. When He takes us upon His wings and carries us into the Holiest of Holies where Jesus dwells we shall forever be satisfied.

DEVILS' BELIEF VERSUS PERFECT FAITH

May, 1950 "The devils also believe and tremble." – James 2:19 I HAVE tried to write for many hours, weeks and months in vain. I have become so exhausted and nervous in the many attempts, that I am thoroughly convinced that I am just as dependent upon the direct operation of God's Holy Spirit to write as I am to preach the gospel of the blessed Son of God. I am making the attempt again with fear and trembling, trusting that God will be pleased to lead my mind into a fruitful field of thought, and give me the words to comfort, console and edify God's little children. I am now

reminded of a request made by P. L. Kenly of Roanoke, Virginia, to write upon James 2:19 especially the last part, to wit: “The devils also believe and tremble.” James did not say that the devils had faith. No place in the Scriptures do we find any statement that would intimate that the devils trusted in God or were in possession of faith. We are forced to admit that the devils gave assent to the fact that there is but one God, even to the acknowledging of Jesus-the Holy One of God-as we shall find when we consider certain Scriptures. We would like to compare and contrast belief and faith to further clarify that expression of Scripture. Belief is the mental assent to a statement, proposition, or existing condition of things. Belief is simply an act of the understanding, but trust and faith are active moving principles of the mind. Belief does not extend beyond the assent of the mind, but trust and faith compel to action. Belief is speculative, while faith and trust are operative. Belief is common to all religions, trust and faith are peculiar to those who believe in divine revelation and salvation by the grace of God. Theorists substitute belief for faith. I trust that the reader will be blessed to keep this in mind as we farther meditate upon this expression of Scripture. Yes, the devils believe there is one God. They do not choose to believe this just because it is pleasing to them, but because that God exercises power over them. No man or devil can believe anything without evidence. God sets the bounds of the devil’s maneuvers and they can go no farther. This is proved in the case of Job when the devil had to secure permission from God each time he chose to hurt Job. Each time the devil was told how far he could go and where he must stop. The devil was forced to believe that he was absolutely controlled by Almighty God. It could not be said of the devil that some people proclaim that he believes in God because their devil has free-will sailing and is so powerful that even though God is trying to save everybody, the devil will be victorious in getting the largest

number. A devil with that kind of power could not believe in God. Remember that James says, “The devils also believe and tremble.” I want to call your attention to the eighth chapter of the gospel according to Matthew 29, “And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” The devils were forced to recognize Jesus as the Son of God. They cried out unto Him fully aware of His power over them. Let us consider their question, “What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God.” They had nothing indeed to do with Him. They had no interest in his grace, blood or righteousness. He was no Savior and Redeemer for them. But contrary to this they realized that He had to do with them. They trembled at His presence and knew they would have to obey His all-commanding voice, though terribly against their wills. They knew He had power to cast them out, “so the devils besought Him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.” Jesus bade them go and they went into the herd of swine. Even Jesus exercised power over the devils to the extent that His word returned not unto Him void, but accomplished that which He pleased, and it prospered in the thing whereunto He sent it. It was astonishing to the observers to see a character who exercised such power and authority that He could command the unclean spirits to come out of men and they would come out. Let us now notice Acts 19:15, “...and the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?” Paul had been disputing daily in the school of Tyrannus for two years. During this long time both Jews and Greeks were privileged to hear the word of the Lord. God wrought special miracles by the hand of Paul in healing diseases and casting out evil spirits. This became so well known that even exorcists attempted to imitate. Some vagabond Jews, who were exorcists, attempted to imitate Paul and Jesus in casting out evil spirits. They would say to

the evil spirits, “We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.” These evil spirits recognized this false claim of power as evidenced in their statement and question. “Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?” They knew that Jesus had the power to cast them out because He had done so in many instances. It was an intimate knowledge because they had heard His command and had been forced to obey Him. They had come in direct contact with Him in the demonstration of His power over them. They had also come in direct contact with Paul and He had commanded them to depart from individuals and they were forced to obey His command. They knew Paul to be a servant of the Lord because He was given power over them. The question, “Who are Ye?” suggests that they did not believe that these vagabond Jews were given this power over them. The evil spirits proved that their surmise was true when they that were possessed of the evil spirits pounced upon these Jews, overcame them, and were victorious over them so that these exorcists had to flee wounded and naked. I am of the opinion that those who are possessed of these evil spirits today may and do fight among themselves, but they are made to tremble when they come into contact with the true servants of the all powerful God. The devil is as a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). He is made to know that some he cannot devour. Those who resist the devil are empowered to do so by Almighty God, and the consequence is that the devils flee from them (James 4:7). It is indeed comforting and consoling to me to think that the devils are subject to the power of God and can do no more than what my Father pleases. They must bow to Him and tremble. May we now consider the subject under discussion by James when he made this statement, “The devils also believe and tremble.” He was treating upon the subject of the perfect faith. He was exposing the folly of those who boast of faith without works. He was insisting that true faith was

made perfect by works. He makes the statement in James 2:17, “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” Not only are works without faith dead works, but it is just as true also, that faith without works is a dead faith. The faith that is a gift of God is a living faith it is not that works are the life of faith, but that good works are the second act necessarily flowing from the life of faith. It is not that we exercise faith by our works, but that faith exercises us into the performing of good works. It is a vain boaster who boasts of his faith in God and by his works denies him. The faith that God gives is not dead, but produces good works. Faith is to works as cause is to effect. James uses two characters to prove that works accompany faith. He cited the works of Abraham and of Rahab, the harlot; and asks if they were not justified by works. As you recall, Paul used these same two characters in his treatise on faith in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. He is contending that faith prompted them to do these things. Paul says that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. This substance and evidence comes only from God as a gift to His children. There are no contradictions in the writings of James and Paul concerning the subject of faith and works. We would like to examine Eph. 2:8-10, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Salvation, both for time and in eternity, is the gift of God. Through His mercy, goodness and gifts we are saved here in time. This is proved by the tense of the verb used in the expression, “By grace are ye saved.” We are saved through faith, and not of ourselves. This faith is not to be obtained through our merits. It is not as a result of any good works of ours, but it is the gift of God. It is not an offer or proposition conditional upon any acts of man, but it is the gift of God.

“Not of works lest any man should boast.” Boasting is excluded. No man can rightly glory in himself nor boast of his goodness. “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.” God is the workman, we are His workmanship; God is the creator, we are the creatures. “Unto good works - not by good works. It is not that good works beget faith, but faith begets good works.” It is by the grace of God that we are enabled to walk godly in the present world. “Which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” God said through one of His prophets, “As I have thought, so shall it come to pass; as I have purposed, so shall it stand.” If this be true, surely, if He ordains something it will be just that way. We find the word “ordained” as being rendered “prepared” when we consult the marginal reference. I believe God prepares His people to walk in good works by working in them. He works in them “both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” The good works are just as certain as is the faith, and is as much the gift of God as is the faith. “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” Your walk and conversation will be godly in this world. We conclude that James and Paul contended that faith and good works were characteristic of God’s little children. A child of God need not boast of his faith and love for these are made manifest in his deeds. He feels little, insignificant and unworthy, and much of the time wonders whether or not he be in possession of this faith and love. If you watch his walk and listen to his conversation, you will find him doing good deeds for his fellowman, and preferring others above himself. There is a change wrought upon one in which it has pleased God to implant this faith and love. It affects his actions and stimulates his conversation. His desires are to obey the commands of Jesus Christ, do the will of God and to praise Him from whence all blessings come. Because of the infirmities of the flesh – the thorns that buffet him about lest

he be exalted above measure – he is not able to do the things that he would. This forces him to be constantly in prayer to Almighty God to be merciful unto his unrighteousness and to forgive him of his sins. This character boasts not of his faith nor of his works. Paul exposed the vanity of those who boasted of their works. James called those who boasted of their faith, "vain men." We see then that boasting either of faith or works would be erroneous, and does not characterize God's little children. May God grant us this living faith and enable us by His grace to walk worthy in good works. May He bless us to give Him the praise for it all. May we look forward and press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus when we shall be called from this low ground of sin and sorrow up into that heavenly realm where and when we shall perfectly praise Him in that endless eternity. May He add His blessings to this writing as edifying to the household of faith. Amen.

PASSING UNDER THE ROD

September, 1950 "And I wilt cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant." – Ezekiel 20:37 I RECEIVED a request some time ago from W. A. Chandler, Jonesboro, Louisiana, to write upon the text of Scripture quoted above. I undertake to do so fully aware of my inability, trusting that God will grace us with His Spirit to illuminate the mind with spiritual meditations. I have found by sad experience that I cannot command the Spirit at my will. We desire to consider first, the people to whom this is addressed, the "YOU" in the text. We find this addressed only to the house of Israel. God spake through the prophet in olden times to the Israelites – national Israel. These same words are now applicable to spiritual Israel, "Elect according

to the foreknowledge of God." Spiritual Israel is now scattered in every nation, kindred, tongue and people throughout the earth. God is not speaking to every one of Adam's race, only to the Israelites. All the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments are addressed to God's children. They are the only ones who can receive them. You will note that all letters recorded in the New Testament are written to a people of certain characteristics. There is not a command, exhortation, invitation or promise recorded in the Bible without a character description attached thereto. I feel that I would be guilty of high treason before Almighty God should I attempt to apply any of the Scriptures as addressed to all of Adam's race. So, in this treatise I want the readers to consider that the "You" in the text applies to all who are included in the everlasting covenant, all those who shall finally be saved in heaven and immortal glory. Sometimes I think it may be boresome or monotonous to those who sit under the sound of my voice, or read my writings, for me to stress the fact that all Scriptures contained in the Bible are written to God's people only. Let us notice next, the "I" in the text. As stated above, it is God speaking. The One who created the heavens and the earth makes these assertions. The One who worked all things after the counsel of His own will is: the author of these expressions. The One who doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth decreed these things. The One who said, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it," spake these words. He that speaks and it is done, commands and it stands fast, made these declarations. He has spoken it, He will also do it; He has purposed it, He will also bring it to pass! Jehovah says, "I will cause you to pass under the rod." What does He mean by this statement? What is the rod, anyway? When I think of a rod I am reminded of

the adage, “Spare the rod and spoil the child.” I think of the proverb, “He that spareth his rod hateth his son.” The Lord chasteneth and scourgeth every son that he receiveth according to Hebrews 12:6. When I think of a rod I think of a whip. I think that troubles, trials, temptations, afflictions, tribulations, and all things that sorely oppress God’s children are the smartings of the rod. These things do not come about accidentally. They do not occur haphazardly because God causes you to pass under them. They are in your path and you cannot escape them. God has ordained them for your good and even though they are not good to you, they are good for you. Some people would have you believe that trouble is solely of the devil, but I am persuaded that it is a blessing of God. He says through the Psalmist, “I will be with him in trouble.” I dare say that your brightest experience immediately followed your greatest distress. According to the Psalmist, He makes the clouds his chariot. It is in the darkest hours that He appears to His people as their deliverer. We would not appreciate the bond were it not for the rod. We would not appreciate the staff were it not for the rod. David said, “Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” The rod beats us down to lean upon the staff, Christ Jesus. The chastening rod of Almighty God causes us to know the filthiness of our own righteousness, and how destitute we are of ability thus fitting us to call upon Him. When we are given to trust in Him, our past troubles then become a comfort to us, for we learn that God used even these as means to bring us unto this trust in Him. Paul said, “We glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulations worketh patience; and patience experience,” etc. Paul realized that these tribulations were necessary means that God used in bringing us into that hope that maketh not ashamed. The rod is not applied to us in order to punish us for our sins, because Christ paid the penalty. This penalty is not against those who are encouched in the covenant, for Jesus satisfied the law in our stead. The

rod is applied to us in order to make right. It is applied to us to whip us into the right path. It beats pride out of us and makes us humble. The effect of the rod is that we learn obedience. Paul told the Hebrews that Jesus learned obedience by the things he suffered. If Jesus was taught obedience by the things He suffered is it a terrible thing that we should lean obedience the same way? Then surely it is a wonderful blessing indeed that He causes you to pass under the rod! The last portion of the text is, "I will bring you into the bond of the covenant." You will notice that, our Lord said, "I will bring you into the bond of the covenant,''not into the covenant. I think all God's children were in the covenant in eternity before time. They have always been embraced and included in the covenant, having been chosen in Christ Jesus from before the, foundation of the world but they must pass under the rod before they can embrace the covenant and come into its relationship. You were chosen into the covenant but you must be brought into the bond of the covenant by the power of Almighty God. What is the bond of the covenant? Could it be that precious hope that is experienced by you? When hungry and thirsty, your soul fainted in you and you were without hope and felt hell would be your just doom; God was gracious to you, He restored your soul and spoke sweet peace to you. Could the bond be that personal stamp of mercy and grace that is imprinted in your heart? Could the bond be the fruits of the spirit that characterizes God's children such as: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance? Could it be the shalls and wills of Jehovah that makes the covenant sure and certain to all those embraced therein? I like to think of the shalls and wills of Jehovah. It is expressed in this covenant that "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." God says in Psalm 91, I will set him on high ... He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With

long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation." Jehovah promises, "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." Space will not permit me to list the many shalls and wills of Jehovah that is now flooding my mind. Suffice it to say that there is not a single condition left for man to perform. Could the setting on high be the bond of the covenant? The rod brings us low and makes us to realize that we are in the miry pit, sinking down, seemingly into perdition. All our feeble attempts sink us deeper and deeper. He comes to our rescue, takes us up out of the pit and sets our feet upon the rock, Christ Jesus. Is it not a setting on high to see Jesus as our Savior? Is it not an elevation to be raised from the fellowship of this world to the fellowship of the children of God? I well remember the joy experienced by me when the church received me into their fellowship. It is indeed a high place to be graced by the Spirit to sing praises unto Him, to pray to Him, to meditate upon His wonderful promises to the children of men, to write and preach His wonderful doctrine of love and grace! Could the bond of the covenant be the full fruition of it? Could it be heaven and immortal glory that awaits you who are kept by the power of God? Could it be the final fulfillment of all the obligations and vows expressed in the covenant that will be experienced in eternity after this time world? I am persuaded that the bond of the covenant is the earnest of the inheritance that is experienced by God's children here in time. This foretaste of His love is sweet. The experiences of these many deliverances are wonderful. The few moments spent in prayer are sacred. The joy of His fellowship is sublime. The tie that binds us together in sweet fellowship one with another is great. All His gifts are matchless. These fleeting moments of enjoyment make us yearn and look forward toward the prize of the high calling when we shall quit the walks of men and be received into the full fellowship of God and all His dear little children. I submit these few columns

over my signature to the readers of the Signs trusting that God will bless as He sees fit. May I add that I have been much concerned about this periodical. I feel it a high honor to be on the editorial staff because I feel that God has blessed it to the comfort of Zion for more than a century. Its writers are contending for the same things that the writers were in 1832. May God bless us to make an attempt to enlarge its circulation. God has blessed it to be the oldest and best periodical of its kind among us and I deem it worthy of our support. Now may the grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the sweet communion of the Holy Spirit, be ours to grace us with a godly walk in this life, choosing our changes in this life, and making us submissive to His choice. May He comfort us across the chilly waters of death and finally receive us up into the better clime where no sin or shame shall be, is my prayer if not deceived.

BAPTISM

February, 1951 THE SUBJECT of baptism has been a subject of great controversy throughout the centuries. Many false and erroneous theories have been advocated which have tended to confuse the minds of God's little children. This is due to the fact that theologians have attempted to supplant a theological meaning of the term that is foreign to the classical meaning in order to prop up their false theories in trying to hinge salvation on the volition and work of the creature. This has narrowed the conception of the term, baptism, to that ceremonial use of water to admit members into an organized body here upon earth termed the church. I do not believe the term is so narrow in its scope. When I think of baptism I like to meditate upon the classical meaning instead of the theological use of the term. To baptize is to

immerse, submerge, envelope, overwhelm or sink; to dip, wash, or drench; to consecrate; to completely subdue. This is the essence of the classical meaning. Even theologians who advocate sprinkling as the proper mode of baptism admit this. I think that baptism in literal water is figurative and typical of the baptism that is essential unto salvation. No man is able, empowered or authorized to do that. This is the work of God. I want to call your attention to one Scripture that will conclusively prove that water baptism is not meant every time the term is used in the Scriptures. Jesus said as recorded in Luke 12:50, "But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." The word straitened means pained. He was undoubtedly speaking of His baptism in death. He was speaking of the time when death would envelop Him, when He would be overwhelmed with suffering and submerged into death. This statement was made approximately two years after His baptism in Jordan. (I think His baptism in Jordan was pointing to, and figurative of, His baptism in death.) Now, let us consider Romans 6:3. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" Paul did not say or hint at water in this expression. If Paul had said, know ye not that as many of us as were baptized in water were baptized in Jesus Christ and into His death; then, the modern theorists would have something to base their arguments upon. Since he did not say this, let us take for granted that he said what he meant and meant what he said. He said, "were baptized into Jesus Christ." Can any man immerse one into Jesus Christ? We may baptize in water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost but man cannot baptize into Jesus Christ. I believe that God chose His people in Christ in the annals of eternity before time ever began. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). "Whom he did foreknow, them he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom.

8:29). The entire family of God was baptized into the body of Christ by God, our Father. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body: so is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:12-13). "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:10). If we were chosen in Him, created in Him, and baptized in Him, we were mysteriously in Him being bone of His bone as He accomplished the law to a jot and tittle while He sojourned in this world of sin and sorrow. I believe that as Jesus performed the law to a jot and tittle, Jehovah could see the entire family of God performing it as they were members of His body, being baptized in Him. The one baptism spoken of in Ephesians 4:5 is that performed by God, the Father in the Son through the operation of the Spirit upon His children. This baptism is essential unto salvation but cannot be performed by man. Yes, God's children were "baptized into His death." They went down with Him into death because they were chosen, created, and baptized in Him. If we be children of God we paid the penalty of death in Him! This being true, justice is completely satisfied in Him for each and every child of God. Nothing can be charged to them. We have touched upon the subject of baptism relative to all the family of God being baptized at once together into Jesus Christ and into His death. Now, we want to meditate upon the experimental phase of baptism. We want to consider the individual, personal baptism that is experienced by each and every child of God. This experimental phase of baptism is progressive in its application as we shall see, the Lord willing. It begins in regeneration and ends in the immortalization of the body. John preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins as recorded in Mark 1:4. All those who made manifest that they were in possession of this baptism by confessing their sins he baptized in the river Jordan, (Mark 1:5) which was an outward manifestation of being in this condition. The rule is according to the words of

Jesus as recorded in Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." The form of the verb used shows that it is not water baptism that is under consideration. The present tense of the verb shows that it is a condition they are now in. They are overwhelmed, immersed, or enveloped now. Are they now enveloped in water by the administrator? No, they are now enveloped in repentance by the Holy Ghost! This being submerged in repentance affects the cry for deliverance or salvation from their sins. This salvation is promised in this statement by Jesus. The hope of each child of God, who is so baptized in repentance by the Holy Ghost, is salvation from their sins through the merits of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When one is baptized in water he outwardly manifests this condition and hope through the grace of the Father, the merits of the Son, and guidance, operation and revelation of the Holy Spirit. "John answered saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (St. Luke 3:16). The effect of the Holy Spirit baptism is regeneration. The souls of God's people are baptized into death and resurrected unto life here in time; and, the bodies of God's people shall be baptized into death and resurrected unto life immortal into the great beyond –the end of this sphere of time. This is that for which we patiently wait and hope. The natural soul trusts in natural man being inspired by the natural carnal spirit. This is the soul that sins. It shall die (Ezek. 18:4). All people are born naturally in this condition. When it pleases God to baptize the soul of one of His people by the Holy Spirit, He kills and makes spiritually alive the soul. Yes, the soul is overwhelmed, immersed, and submerged into death and resurrected into a new life. The soul that has been so wrought upon by the Holy Spirit shall never die. It is a new creature. According to Psalm 107 the experience of the redeemed is, "Hungry and thirsty, their

soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their troubles and he delivered them out of their distresses." This is brought about by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We read in Luke 3:3, "And he came into all the county about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." This does not say baptism of water but of repentance. This means that you must be overwhelmed, submerged, and immersed with repentance unto salvation not to be repented of (2 Cor. 7:10). When you are overwhelmed with repentance you abhor yourself; you repent in dust and ashes. When you abhor yourself you die to the love of self. You sink into despair; you are immersed in trouble and distresses. As He did not leave Christ in the grave He does not leave your soul in despair but raises it up a new soul. This is verified in Psalms 23:3, "He restoreth my soul." You are then a new creature motivated by a spiritual soul. The mortal soul which is subject to death, has been baptized with immortality. This makes the soul immortal. Now, you are an immortal soul dwelling in a mortal body. This body has not yet been baptized with immortality. That will be the crowning work of the Holy Spirit. Paul says in Romans 7:24, "Oh wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Paul realized the sinfulness and mortality of his body. All God's children are possessed with the thorn in the flesh and infirmities of the flesh. Our bodies are subject to weaken and die. We cannot do the things we would because of the evil that is present in our fast decaying bodies. The body becomes lame and tottery with age. Our bodies become weak because of disease. Our natural eyes become dim and our natural ears deafen. Our memory fails and our ability to comprehend is affected. Our natural minds fail to function as they once did. I feel that as we experience these things we become more and more desirous of the immortalization of the bodies. "Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the

redemption of our body." (Rom. 8:23). Yes, the bodies of the saints shall be baptized into death and shall be completely submerged, enveloped, swallowed up, or baptized with immortality. "So, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54). This will be the answer to the prayer as recorded in 1 Thess. 5:23, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The baptism in water is figurative of this baptism that is essential unto salvation. This is not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God: which is a figure of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. See 1st Peter 3:21. There are two kinds of conscience. There is a natural conscience and there is a Holy Spirit conscience. A good conscience is a Holy Spirit conscience. I believe that God's people are wrought upon by His Spirit and are made anxious to follow Jesus in baptism. They are desirous to outwardly manifest this faith in the Father baptizing them in the Son by the Spirit by submitting themselves to baptism in water in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. As the candidate for baptism is passive in the hands of the administrator in the act of baptism in water, so he manifests his faith in being in Christ as He went down into the grave and came up out of the grave. As baptism into Jesus Christ and into His death is the door of entrance into the Church which is the one invisible body including all the children of God, so baptism in water is the door of entrance into the church in its organized form upon earth. John required those whom he baptized to bring forth fruit worthy of repentance. I believe such characters are the only ones worthy to be received into the organized Church. When one comes confessing his sins, and considering himself as the chief of

sinners and less than the least of all saints, speaking of his unworthiness, my heart goes out to him and I am given to fellowship him. When such an one comes testifying that his hopes for salvation from sins is solely based on the grace of God and the merits of the Lord Jesus, I consider him as a proper subject for baptism in water into the fellowship of the organized Church. None but those who have been baptized with repentance would come bringing such testimony from the heart desiring a home with God's people. The Church receives such into their fellowship and one properly ordained will gladly administer the ordinance to that character. I realize that I have just hinted upon this grand subject. These thoughts are my earnest and conscientious convictions. If they be true, may God be praised. If they be false, charge them to my ignorance and vain imaginations. May God bless this to your comfort and edification, if it be His will, is my prayer for Christ's sake.

A SAVIOR BORN

May, 1951 "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." – Isaiah 9:6 MORE THAN seven centuries before the birth of Jesus in the city of Bethlehem these words were written by the prophet, Isaiah. There can be no doubt in the minds of true Bible readers that Jesus Christ is the character under consideration. We pray God will bless us to consider this text in such a wonderful way that we may be comforted and edified. May we be blessed to gloriously rejoice upon some of the beauties contained in these thoughts. We desire to consider the text by phrases in the order in which they are

written. “Unto us a child is born.” Who is included in the term “us?” Isaiah is writing to the Israelites, the chosen people of God. National Israel is a type of spiritual Israel. Spiritual Israel is in existence today. Paul was an Israelite as he stated in his letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 11:22). I believe that all God’s children who are chosen unto eternal life are members of spiritual Israel. True Israelites are the only ones who are included in the pronoun us in this text. If you are a child of God you are included in this term. Isaiah did not say unto each and ever Adamic creature, but “unto us a child is born.” He is born unto a specific people. Yes, He is born to you. He was born of the virgin, Mary, in the city of Bethlehem almost two thousand years ago, and people have set a date to annually attempt to celebrate His birth; but when did you and do you actually celebrate the birth of Christ? You actually celebrate His birth when He is born in you as your precious hope of glory (Col. 1:27). When God knows a person by the direct operation of His Holy Spirit in individual relationship there is a conception. The result of this conception is a birth, the birth of Christ in you as your hope of glory. “Unto us a son is given.” This Son is peculiar in the fact that He is the Son of God as well as the Son of man. He is both human and divine. There are two erroneous theories concerning Jesus Christ prevalent today. One theory is that He was solely divine which would deny Him as being the Son of Man. The other theory is that He was solely human which would deny Him as being the Son of God. Jesus, as the Son of man, was acquainted with grief, was tempted, wounded and bruised, and did suffer and die on the cross. Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, performed miracles, was glorified, overcame temptations, accomplished the law, conquered death, and is at the right hand of the throne of God making intercession for the saints of God according to the will of God. This Son is given. He is not offered subject to acceptance or rejection of the creature. If it be necessary to

raise a hand, say a word or do anything in order for the creature to receive this Son it would not be a gift –it would be an offer or reward. I believe this Son is given to each and every one who has learned through sad experience appointed to them that they are unworthy, unable, and that it is utterly impossible to do anything to merit any favor or mercy of God. Paul said, "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:3-5). "And the government shall be upon his shoulder." This one who is given unto us is our King. The preacher said, "Where the word of a king is, there is power" (Eccl. 8:4). This King has all power in heaven and upon the earth. This being true, when He speaks it is done, when He commands, it stands fast. The word that goeth forth out of His mouth shall not return unto Him void; but it shall accomplish that which He pleases; it shall prosper in the thing whereunto He sends it (Isaiah 55:11). We, being creatures who are created equal, believe in the democratic form of government as being proper in our political and earthly organizations. Even in our organized churches we do not believe that one creature should have the authority to lord anything over others with exception of that One who has the government upon His shoulder. We maintain that Christ is the Head of His church. He calls, qualifies, sends and uses each and every one of His subjects when, where and how He pleases. He never makes a call in vain. He never fails to qualify; when He sends they go. Each and every one fits and functions properly. You show me any church that places the government of that church upon the shoulder of any mortal man or group of men, and I will show you one that is not the Church of Christ. You show me a church that has to have boards, auxiliary societies and many organizations to assist in the business of the church,

and I will point to that one as not the Church of Christ. The government of Christ's Church is upon His shoulder and He is sufficient to attend to its business. No business is good business when it concerns the Church. Some think that gathering sheep into the fold is the function of the Church. This is the work of Christ as He said, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice" (John 10:16). If the government be upon His shoulder– and His words are true–do you think He needs any assistance in this work? They tell us of a person who is begging, pleading and trying to get people to accept Him; thousands of people and organizations who are assisting Him and holding Him up; notwithstanding all this He is unsuccessful to the extent that the devil gets the majority of them. This person is not the One under consideration in the text. "His name shall be called Wonderful." He is wonderful. When I think of wonderful I think of something astonishing and singular. Words cannot express the amazement I experienced when I was given to trust in the work of Jesus Christ as accredited to my account. I was astonished that He should have compassion upon a hell-deserving wretch such as I felt myself to be. His name is above every name. It is the only name given whereby we must be saved. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life of each and every one of God's children. It is wonderful that He is God manifest in the flesh. It is wonderful that He could accomplish the law to a jot and tittle for His people. It is wonderful that He could pay the penalty and satisfy justice for His people's sins by dying on the cross. It is wonderful that He could conquer death, hell and the grave and come forth from the tomb and walk and talk with His disciples. It is wonderful that He could ascend into the heavens and leave the comforting thought with His disciples that at some future time He would come again without sin unto salvation to gather His people into that eternal home. It is wonderful that

He is so acquainted with all your temptations and troubles, that He can intercede to God for you as your Counsellor. Yes, His name is to be called Counsellor. You hire and pay your counsellors in earthly courts, but this Counsellor is given to you. He is the one who pleads your case before the Judge. He is in a position to tell the Judge that He met all the requirements in your stead. Earthly counsellors do not agree to pay the penalty assessed against you by the court, but this Counsellor paid the penalty assessed. When you look for one to represent you in the courts of the land you want one who is thoroughly acquainted and experienced with your type of case. Here is the Counsellor who was tempted in all points like as we (Heb. 4:15). He was forsaken, grieved, suffered, and experienced poverty. He also experienced inability as he said, "I can of mine own self do nothing" (John 5:30). When you give all the facts in the case that you can think of to earthly counsellors at their inquiry you find later that you have left out something vital to the case that you wished you could have told them. This Counsellor already knows your every trouble and has all the facts in your case. Earthly counsellors may be busy and you have to wait for your time before you can talk with them, but this Counsellor is not neglectful and has ample time and ears to hear your cries and beseechings. You may have tried to tell your troubles to your friends here and pour out your heart to them, but have you ever experienced the relief of mind and peace in your heart as you did when you poured out your heart and was blessed to pray through this Counsellor to Almighty God? As long as you are capable of handling your affairs, even as long as you think you are capable, you have no use for a counsellor. When things get beyond your knowledge and power you seek a counsellor. I maintain that as long as a person feels capable of pursuing any distance toward gaining eternal life upon his own merits he does not feel the need of a counsellor. He is acting upon his own strength and self-

righteousness and will not call upon this Counsellor. When a person learns by sad experience that he is nothing and all his seeming self-righteousness is but filthy rags in the sight of God, he feels the need and desires the aid of the Counsellor. Jesus Christ is officiating as Counsellor when He is at the right hand of the Father making intercession for the saints of God according to the will of God. He is officiating as the Counsellor when He is speaking words of comfort to the trembling child of God. He is officiating as the Counsellor when He is calling, qualifying, sending forth, and using each child of God to the praise of His glorious name. Dear trembling child of God, do not put your trust in any man upon earth, or any set of men to give you wisdom. James was inspired to say, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." May God grant you grace to trust all to this Counsellor! This same character is also to be called "The Mighty God." The scriptures affirm that the three in the Godhead are One. God the Father; God the Son; and God the Holy Ghost; these three are One. Jesus Christ was once without power but now He has all power in heaven and on earth. If Jesus Christ be the Mighty God He has all power in heaven and on earth. He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa. 46:10). If He be the Mighty God do you think He will fail in bringing any of the subjects of His grace to the knowledge of the truth? Do you think that any one for whom He gave His life will fail to be saved in heaven and immortal glory in the end of this timely sphere? I cannot conceive the idea that any of His purpose will fail in the least degree. His name is rightly termed The everlasting Father. He is because He is founder and builder of His Church. Jesus Christ is Father because He is the Chief Ruler of His people. He is the King of His kingdom. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. The

term everlasting signifies unchangeableness. We change but His care for us never wavers. He loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and in sins. When we are cold and careless He is interceding and caring for us. He is the everlasting Father because He finishes anything He begins. Our earthly fathers may forsake us but He knows what we need and gives us exactly what is best for us though we may not think it best. He keeps each and every one of His people from falling finally away and saves them eternally from the dominion, power and presence of sin. His name shall be called The Prince of Peace. Those of you who have been in severest of troubles, and have experienced that deep soothing calm that came from no earthly source can rightly call Him the Prince of Peace. I heard a soldier once relate an experience concerning this peace. He said he was in the midst of one of the severest battles of World War II where bombs were exploding all around. Every one of his comrades had been critically wounded and killed by falling shrapnel. He was so afraid and distressed that there were indescribable throbbings and surgings of his troubled and depressed mind. All at once there was such a wonderful, deep, calming influence that affected him that he was not afraid or troubled even though the bombs were still exploding, and shrapnel still falling all around. He was made to know that God absolutely controlled everything and that nothing could hurt him. This Prince of Peace caused this boy to peacefully rejoice in the midst of battle. This Prince of Peace causes His people to be content with their lot and gloriously reconciles them to His will. Is it not a peace that surpasseth all things else to realize that God cares and is mindful of you? He takes care of sparrows and not one falls without Him, and even the hairs of your head are numbered. He understands your thoughts afar off and there is not a word in your tongue that He does not now altogether. He becomes your Prince of Peace when He causes you to feel that His providence will

protect and His grace will direct you aright. He becomes your Prince of Peace when He takes your feet up out of an horrible pit of selfdependence and places them upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, as your hope for eternal life. He becomes your Prince of Peace when He puts a new song in your mouth which sings praises unto God instead of the old song of praise of yourself. He comes as a Prince of Peace when He picks you up on the balmy wings of His love while you are hopelessly falling down – down into the abyss of destruction and ruin. That wonderful peace that you experienced when you are blessed to pray, sing, speak, write and meditate upon His wonderful goodness to the children of men is inexpressible. What a calming peace when you are blessed to speak kind words to some cast down individual. What a blessed peace when you are given to assist some fallen creature and do deeds of kindness to the less fortunate. May the Prince of Peace be pleased to soften the hearts of the political leaders of the countries of this war-torn world that lasting peace be the result. If this be contrary to His will may He cause us to be content with our lot and make us reconciled to His will, for He knows best. May God direct the words that have been written to the comfort of some poor soul is my desire. Pray for me because I feel to be the chief of sinners and less than the least of all saints so much of the time.

“THE STEPS OF A GOOD MAN ARE ORDERED BY THE LORD”

December, 1951 The expression that heads this article is found in Psalm 37:23. We trust that we have learned by experience and revelation the truthfulness of this statement. There was a time in our sojourn here that we could not receive this as a true statement. We thought we could order,

command, decree, or perform our own steps within and of ourselves. We thought this was the right way and that we possessed the ability to direct our steps aright. But, alas! We found by sad experience that this was the way that seemeth right unto man but the ends thereof are the ways of death! In our desperation we were made to cry out as the prophet, "O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). We did not know this until we had tried with all our might to walk aright and every trial met with defeat. All of our own devising was fruitless. Then we were made to trust no longer in ourselves for deliverance; we were forced to look to another source for salvation; we were made to cry to God; and, He heard our cry! We trust that we experienced the deliverance as recorded in Psalms 40:2, "He brought me up, also, out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." Have you ever been in an horrible pit and tried to walk when your feet were in miry clay? Your feet slip and slide so that you cannot direct your steps. Every trial leads you deeper into the mire until you are stuck. It is in this helpless condition that you pray for deliverance. When the Lord hears your cry and brings you up out of the pit and miry clay and sets your feet upon a firm foundation and directs your steps –you are, then made to agree with Proverbs 16:9, "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps." Is it your experience that you have to be shown again and again these things? My experience is that this primitive deliverance and primary experience was not sufficient to make me to be at all times conscious of my dependence upon Him. Sometimes, it seems, that God graces me with a godly walk for a period of time and my body is kept under subjection and I begin to gloat over my steadfastness in my walk and feel that I shall never stray from the paths of righteousness. Then I am brought to my true status and made to embrace the

language as expressed in Psalm 73:2, “But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped.” I notice in Psalm 37:24 regarding the good man of the text the psalmist says, “Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand.” If I know what this fall is I have experienced it many times in my pilgrimage here. I believe Peter experienced it when Satan was permitted to sift him as wheat. Jesus did not tell Peter: I have prayed that you fail not: but, “I have prayed that thy faith fail not.” Peter failed to do that he avowed to do. He desperately failed, but that faith that had been given him by the Lord was not faith in Peter but faith in Jesus Christ. These falls are destined to strengthen our faith in Him who is able to deliver us from these terrible conditions. These falls enable us to rejoice in the mighty Hand of the Lord that upholds us so that we shall not be utterly cast down. We read in Psalm 37:31 of a good man that, “The law of his God is in his heart: none of his steps shall slide.” None of his steps shall slide because God orders by His law; directs by His spirit; and, enables and performs for him by “working in him both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” We are informed by Proverbs 16:1 that the preparations of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue is of the Lord. According to the Scriptures He takes from us the stony heart, gives us a heart of flesh, writes His law in our hearts: and, enables the heart to believe and the tongue to confess by the direct operation of His Holy Spirit. It is no wonder that none of the steps of God’s children shall slide when we consider that He is so gracious to them by establishing their goings and causing them to know from whom cometh their strength! We want to consider now some of the steps that are ordered by the Lord. The steps that God orders would not be the steps that man would voluntarily take upon his own initiative. Man would naturally try to escape the first step that we shall mention. We maintain that man is not able or desirous to

take any of them. Suffering must be a step, for we read in 1st Peter 2:21, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." This emphatically states that you are called to suffering. Suffering is necessary in order that we reign with Him according to 2 Tim. 2:12. The writer to the Hebrews in speaking concerning Jesus said, "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him" (Heb. 5:8-9). Suffering was necessary in order that Jesus learn obedience. Suffering is necessary for us in order that we obey. We learn obedience by the things which we suffer. Were it not for suffering we would yet be satisfied with our own righteousness and ability. Severe afflictions were blessings in disguise, causing us to realize the filthiness of ourselves and our need of Him and His guidance, love and mercy. "Not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulations worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us." Yes, sever afflictions work patience, the next step the Lord orders. We are brought into humble submission to His ruling. He causes us to be still and know that He is God (Ps. 46:10). He makes us to know that He works all things after the counsel of His own will. We are made to be content with our lot and reconciled to His will. We are blessed to endure hardships and constantly look to Him for deliverance. Experience is the next step recorded by the apostle. After that we have been caused to suffer until we have been made to patiently wait upon Him – then we begin to experience and realize the hand of God in the matter. He comes to our rescue and begins to manifest Himself as our deliverer. We experience His grace, loving-kindness and tender mercy. We begin to look upon Him as our Rock, our

Refuge, and our hiding place. He has stilled the tempest, calmed our minds, and delivered us from trusting in self and has caused us to look to the merits of the blessed Son of God for our salvation. This has worked a hope. We are not yet delivered from sin for we find that sin is mixed with all we do and "When we would do good evil is present with us." We earnestly desire and expect some day to be delivered from the presence of sin through the merits of Jesus and the amazing grace of Almighty God. This is the hope of God's children. "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom. 8:24-25). When blessed to be in the sweet embrace of His love, we realize, "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil?" (Heb. 6:19). This hope maketh not ashamed. The subjects who have been ordered to take the aforestated steps are not embarrassed to own Him as their total Savior. Jesus will not be ashamed of us because we are made not ashamed of Him. We are not of them that Jesus referred to as recorded in Mark 8:38, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his father with the Holy angels." Do you consider it a disgrace to believe and avow that God is sovereign over all things? Do you blush in contending for the doctrine of salvation solely by grace through the merits of Jesus? Ashamed of Jesus! Sooner far Let evening blush to own a star; He sheds the beams of light divine O'er this benighted soul of mine. Ashamed of Jesus! Yes I may, When I've no guilt to wash away, No tear to wipe, no good to crave, No fears to quell, no soul to save. Repentance is a step that is ordered by the Lord. No doubt Ephraim of old tried to repent of himself thereby ordering his own steps. He certainly was

unsuccessful in the attempt and was made to cry to God, "Turn thou me and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord, my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented" (Jer. 31:18-19). You see that repentance must be ordered by the Lord. When it is so ordered it is sure. It is certain because Christ gives it to spiritual Israel for it is recorded in Acts 5:31, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, the forgiveness of sins." When God revealed Himself to Job it caused him to say, "I abhor myself; I repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6). We are made to hate sin and pray for deliverance from it. Faith is a step that is ordered by the Lord. Faith is the evidence of the new birth. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1 John 5:1). The faith that was once delivered to the saints is the trust in the three-one God. Do you have faith in the Father who chose His people in the Son; predestinated them unto salvation; made all the provisions for their salvation; and who is so perfect in power and wisdom that none of His decrees shall faith but all shall have the desired effects – all things were ordained by Him and for the perfecting of His grand purpose, the salvation of His people? Do you possess faith in that Son who accomplishes all the requirements of the law for you; took your sins upon Himself, paid the penalty, satisfied justice by shedding His blood for you; is now at the right hand of God's throne making intercessions for you according to the Father's will? Have you been made to feel the calming influence of the Holy Spirit that reveals these things to you that the Father has designed and the Son has accomplished? Has the comforter ever soothed your aching heart and made you to cry with joy, "My Redeemer liveth"? This faith is the gift of God, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that [faith] not of yourselves: it [faith] is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). We find by reading further that it is not of works but unto good works. So, the

next step we find ordered by the Lord is good works. These good works are the result of that faith which is a living or working faith –not the dead faith spoken of by James 2:17, "Even so faith, if it hath not works is dead, being alone." This living faith activates the subjects and causes them to "...warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men" (1 Thess. 5:14-15). When it pleases God to work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure a godly walk is the result and our conversation is godly. All these good works are inspired by faith and motivated by love. We love God because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). He did not love us because we love Him, for "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). We are not capable of loving divinely until He manifests His love toward us in giving us this divine love by the Holy Spirit. Then, we love Him and love one another. It is an order of God that we love one another and this order is effectual. He said through the mouth of the prophet, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it." Love is one of the fruits of the Spirit and is made manifest in the lives of God's children. Those who are not born of the Spirit act solely upon selfish desires in hope of reward or in fear of punishment. Those born of the Spirit are stimulated by love in their actions to one another. Love is the law He indelibly imprinted in this new heart of yours. Many of God's children are ordered to follow their Lord in being baptized in water which is an outward manifestation and figure of being enveloped by the body of Jesus –being in Him as He accomplished the law, paid the penalty of death, and was resurrected. (See Romans 6:3). Baptism in water is an

outward manifestation of being enveloped and immersed in repentance. Baptism in water is signifying a hope of the mortal body being some day baptized with immortality. As baptism into Jesus and His death by God creating them in Him was the entrance into the Church universal, so then, baptism in water is the proper entrance in to the church militant. God orders, directs, inspires and empowers His children in the steps of singing, praying, preaching, communing, and doing all that is becoming to saints. When He says, "sing," we sing with the Spirit and understanding. When He says, "pray," we pray without ceasing. When He says, "preach," we preach the Word. When He directs us to teach we teach transgressors His ways. When He directs us to run, we are enabled to lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us and run with patience the race that is set before us –looking only to Jesus as the Author and Finisher of our faith. Time, space, nor ability will permit us to put in words our many thoughts upon this great subject. We have briefed the steps mentioned. Many steps that arrested our thoughts have not been written in this manuscript. Suffice it to say, we trust that God will bless these few hints to your comfort and edification. May He stir up your pure minds to recall the many steps in your experience that God has ordered. I desire to close this article on "The Steps of A Good Man Are Ordered By The Lord" by quoting Philippians 1:6: "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Signs of the Times, Vol. 163, No. 3, March 1995

TONGUES

September, 1952 Before entering upon the discussion of the text of this article, I beg to make an apology. I have been so nervous the past several months that it has been impossible for me to sit still and concentrate long enough to write a letter. I trust the readers of the Signs will find in their hearts a spirit of forgiveness to forgive me for not writing before now. I have to be convinced over and over again that the will to write is not sufficient. I must be given the ability in the self-same hour that I attempt before I can write. May I evade further to tell you that we have been highly honoured to have Elder Spangler and Sister Spangler, Elder Griffin and Sister Griffin to visit us in our little home, as well as the homes and churches in this vicinity since writing you. Their graceful preaching at the churches and over the radio will long be remembered in this section of the country as inspirational, edifying, and very comforting. Now, may the Lord bless us to meditate upon the text in answer to a request from an esteemed elder. The best definition of tongue, as used in the Scriptures, is that it is a particular language or dialect spoken by any particular people. We want to base our remarks upon one of the five signs that shall follow them that believe, as recorded in Mark 16:17, “They shall speak with new tongues.” The believers are the particular people, and the new language given them by the Lord by the direct operation of His Holy Spirit, is the new tongue. We maintain that the new language spoken by God’s people after the work of regeneration is unknown to the world and cannot be learned or understood by them. The early ministrations of the Spirit in the manifestation of the power thereof was evidenced in the performance of natural miracles which were signs, types or figures of spiritual miracles. Jesus raised the natural dead, signifying His power to raise the spiritual dead unto spiritual life. Natural blind eyes were opened; natural deaf ears were unstopped; the lame walked, the palsied were made whole; they spake in

different natural languages; – all to figurate the spiritual work in regeneration of His people. This was evidenced on the day of Pentecost according to Acts 2:3-4, "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the spirit gave them utterance." Even though there were people of many different languages, each heard in his own tongue. Today, if we speak the truth to the edification of the Lord's little children we have to speak as the Spirit gives utterance with the tongue as of fire from heaven. All hear in his own language. I shall never forget attending a meeting of colored people one time. The colored minister was so blessed to tell my experience and to speak my thoughts and belief that I said to those accompanying me, "They speak our language." It is marvelous to note the similarity of expressions in the different parts of the country. I was so deeply impressed on my first trip to the east coast that I said to those strangers in the flesh, "I am persuaded that we all have the same Teacher, as we speak the same language." I am glad the record says that, "On the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost, for they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God" (Acts 10:45-46). This new tongue magnifies God, thus abasing man. The gift of tongues in those days caused them to prophesy according to Acts 19:6, "And when Paul laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came upon them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied." Paul said in 1 Cor. 14:4, "He that prophesieth edifieth the church." Jabbering that can neither be understood by the speaker nor any of the hearers could not be edifying. I do not believe God give gifts in vain. I believe the gift of tongues is the gift of a particular language – not something that is a language that cannot be understood by anyone. We can see the necessary use of these special natural gifts of the Spirit as several languages were spoken

by the people of the same locality. It would be foolish for me to make a display of the gift to speak the French language in a congregation where there were none who understood French. If I should go to a country where the people only spake and understood Latin, it would be improper for me to speak English in the church there unless there was an interpreter, according to 1st Cor. 14:27-28. If my lot were cast among people who spoke many different natural languages, to prophesy there would be a necessity for the gift of speaking different languages. I believe this could be just as possible in this day as in days gone by and is the case when necessary. I know of men who have the special gift of speaking several languages. Paul said in 1 Cor. 14:9, "Except ye speak words easy to be understood, how shall it be know what is spoken for ye shall speak in the air." Paul said he had rather speak five words with understanding in the church than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue (1 Cor. 14:19). I think the true significance of the gift of tongues as prevalent today is whether they speak with the tongue of men or the tongue of angels. Paul inferred a possibility of being in possession of the gift of the tongue of angels and at the same time having not charity. He states that the result of this would be as "sounding brass or tinkling cymbal." This would give an uncertain sound (see 1 Cor. 13:1). We would like to contrast the "tongue of men" and "the tongue of angels" or the "old" tongue and the "new" tongue. We call your attention to Psalm 58:3, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray, as soon as they are born, speaking lies." So, the tongue of men is a lying tongue. David's natural tongue was a false and deceitful tongue, as he prayed, "Deliver my soul O Lord, from lying lips and a deceitful tongue. What shall be given unto thee or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?" (Ps. 120:2- 3.) David realized something had to be given to, or done for that terrible tongue which he was unable to do. Therefore, he

prayed to God. In Proverbs 4:24, we read of "A froward mouth and perverse lips." This kind of tongue speaks contrary to right reason, contrary to the law of God; things that are foolish, filthy, unjust, and untrue. According to Eccl. 5:2-3 and Prov. 10:19, hasty speech and multitude of words are sin. The tongue has to be restrained, bridled, and tamed. The tongues of men enter into contention, become a snare to their soul, and are as whisperers and tale bearers as proved by Proverbs 18:6-8. Yes, it talks of fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, foolish talking and jesting; (Eph. 5:3-4) anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy communication (Col. 2:8). James 3:5 says that the tongue is a little member and boasteth great things. The natural tongue boasts of the ability of man. When we hear one boasting of what he can do we may be assured that he is speaking in the old or natural tongue which has never been supplanted by the new. The natural tongue boasts of self-righteousness. When one speaks boastfully of his own righteousness, we may know that is the old tongue. James also says that it defiles the whole body, being an unruly evil which is full of deadly poison. Can the tongue be tamed? Man may put bridles into horse's mouths and direct them. He may tame beasts, birds and serpents, and may direct a ship with a very small helm wheresoever he desireth even against fierce winds, but can he tame the tongue? According to the third chapter of James many may do all the above "but the tongue can no man tame" (James 3:8) According to the words of James and my experience, it is impossible for a man upon the volition of his own will to tame the tongue that it will not lie, deceive, wound, talk foolish and jest. If man cannot tame or bridle the tongue, then I want to know as David did, what must be given or done to it? and who can do it? I am persuaded that the Lord must give us the new tongue by the direct operation of His Holy Spirit before we can manifest a bridled tongue. If you will notice in Mark 16:17, that it says, "They shall speak

with new tongues," not in new tongues. The tongue must be given them. Let us read Isaiah 50:4, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning. He wakeneth my ear to hear as the learned." If I am in possession at any time of the learned tongue it is because it has been given me by the Lord. I believe there is a time and a season for every word properly spoken to the weary to their comfort and edification. I cannot learn how to do this. I do not know when certain words ought to be spoken. Even though I try to learn when, how, and what to say to certain people on certain occasions, I learn by sad experience that I cannot learn those things, but must depend on the words being put in my mouth that would edify and comfort. The learned tongue is the gift of God. The learned tongue speaks words in proper season. The learned tongue gives a soft answer that turns away wrath. The learned tongue confesses Jesus as our Savior. Quoting Romans 10:10, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." God does not begin something that He doesn't finish. He begins by giving the new heart that believes. He continues that good work begun by giving the new tongue that confesses. You may be a believer and think you are hiding it, but are not, – your speech betrays you. You talk of your unfitness, unworthiness, and of your inability; you say if you are saved it will be solely because of God's mercy and grace based on the merits of Jesus. You speak a different language; you sing a different song. Let us meditate upon Psalm 40:3, "He hath put a new song in my mouth even praise unto our God." You sing of His mercy, grace and truth; you sing of His power, wisdom and holiness. Your song is now in harmony with the Scriptures. It is in perfect accord with the experience of your brethren. The old song was sung in the key of man – the praise of man being the keynote. The

new song is sung in a different key – the key of Jesus. This new song praises God. If you want to hear a discord in natural singing try singing in a different key to the others in the class. If you hear some praising man and some praising God, you hear a discord. The old tongue can't learn to sing a new song. The new song must be put into the mouth by the direct operation of God's Holy Spirit, thereby the new tongue is given to sing the new song. We read in St. Luke 12:12, "For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." The instructions say to take no thought how are what ye shall answer. As I stated before, I am guilty of taking thought, which manifests one of my many weaknesses. I learn continually by sad experience, that my efforts are in vain. I am allowed at times to speak upon the subject that I have premeditated to use at a certain time, and often it makes me sick. Sometimes I have tried to re-use a line of thought that was so inspirational to me when I experienced it, but behold, worms have gotten in it and it is stale; it has lost food value. James says, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain" (James 1:26). True religion must manifest a bridled tongue. No man is able to bridle it; so, it must be the new tongue that God enables you to bridle. This bridled tongue is a wholesome tongue. In Proverbs 15:4 we read, "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life..." It is soothing and healing to be in the company of those who speak words that are edifying. The wholesome tongue speaks sound doctrine which cannot be condemned. Those in possession of this tongue speak healing words to wounded consciences. They speak of the pardon, peace, righteousness, redemption and salvation through the life and blood of Jesus, motivated by the love, mercy and grace of God, our Father. May God bless us with this new tongue that drives away wrath instead of stirring up anger. May He bless us to edify, comfort and heal. May we not be hasty in speech,

but may we speak "As the oracles of God." Peter wrote by inspiration, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God..." (1 Peter 4:11). If man speaks as the oracles of God it is by divine utterances. It would be in accord with the Scriptures. I realize that I have not been enabled to do justice to the text. I trust that the readers will be charitable to forgive imperfect expressions and that you realize all errors are expressions of the old tongue. If there be anything wholesome in this article, it is evidence of the new tongue, and be assured that God is to be praised for it. Signs of the Times, Vol. 163, No. 4, April 1995

SPIRITUAL SONGS ACCORD WITH GOD'S STRINGED INSTRUMENTS

January, 1953 My late visit with the editors and many readers of the Signs in Virginia, Delaware, New Jersey, Maryland, Pennsylvania and other places has stimulated me with a greater desire to write to the Household of Faith through this medium. The visit with the Welsh Tract, Hopewell, and other historical meeting places of God's children through the centuries past has peculiarly affected me. It is inspirational to learn that the same principles of Truth have been loved, cherished and contended for by His people these hundreds of years in the same meeting place. While attending Salisbury Association held at Delmar, Delaware, the text of this article began to arrest my attention. God willing, I shall use Isaiah 38:20, as basis for my remarks: "The Lord was ready to save me; therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord." We shall attempt to prove that the songs of God's people are their spiritual experiences and the stringed instruments are the harp of God, the hearts

of His people, the Bible, etc. We want to show that a psalm or an hymn is not necessarily a spiritual song to one of God's people at all times. We expect to show that the stringed instruments under consideration are not pianos, organs, or any like instrument made and tuned by man –which will get out of tune –but, that which God has tuned, strung, and prepared, which never gets out of tune. Re-read the paragraph above and may it become fixed in your mind before we meditate further upon the text. Read Isaiah 38, and then prayerfully consider the following meditations. The expression found in the 20th verse was made by Hezekiah, King of Judah, after undergoing critical experiences brought about by the Lord dealing with him. Even though he be king he was brought low by the Lord. He was sick unto death, and word came to him from the Lord, "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die and not live" (Isa. 38:1). We read a similar command in Amos 4:12 to Israel, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." I am persuaded a similar command comes to every spiritual Israelite in the beginning of an experience of grace. When we try to cope with the situation in trying to set our house in order in preparation to meet God, we find ourselves as miserable failures in the attempt. This forces us to pray to God for mercy. Surely Hezekiah's attempts were in vain to set his house in order and he was made to depend upon God for this. We would all sink into death were it not for what the Lord adds unto our life. Our life is sinful, He adds holiness; our life is unstable, He adds stability; our life is earthly, He adds heaven; our life is ungodly, He adds godliness. We come to the end of our path. He leads us into a new path. We die, He adds life. Dear trembling child, has the Lord added unto your life? Our life is unstrung and untuned. He tunes and strings our hearts to sing His praise! This must have been Hezekiah's experience as he said, "The Lord was ready to save me." We learn that we cannot save ourselves. It is not the question: am I ready for the Lord to save me?

But, is the Lord ready to save? All things are so ordered and arranged, tuned and strung by the Lord that events so fall in perfect order and rhythm that a fixed time, place, and circumstance comes for the Lord's salvation to be made manifest to each and every one of the trophies of His amazing grace. Because the Lord was ready to save me –"we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments." We read in Ephesians 5:19, of "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." What were the songs Hezekiah had under consideration? Psalms and hymns would include all compositions written with natural verse to be used in religious worship. When any hymn or psalm is in perfect harmony with our experience and feelings, it becomes our spiritual song. Paul says in 1st Cor. 14:15, "I will sing with the understanding also." There is a natural song and there is a spiritual song. There are experiences that are natural and there are experiences that are spiritual. The song that is natural is the old song and the song that is spiritual is that the Lord adds by putting into your mouth the new song. We would like to contrast the old song and the new. The old song is sung in the key of man –man being the central keynote. The new is sung in the key of Jesus Christ –He being the foundation key. If you want to hear a discord, try singing the old and the new together. They will not harmonize, for the old song praises man the new song praises God. The old sings of the ability of man and the new song proclaims man's inability. The old song utters salvation is hinged upon the volition and works of the creature, while the new bases the creatures' salvation upon the volition and work of the three-one God. The new song being opposed to the old prevents the harmonization of the two. You will note that Hezekiah says, "my songs." This means his own personal spiritual experiences. Unless the Lord has added to your individual life you cannot sing these songs. There are more spiritual

experiences than one. Sometimes you sing, “All things work together for good.” Sometimes you feel, “All things are against me.” Sometimes you are asking, “Is God gone forever?” Sometimes you say, “I know that my Redeemer liveth.” Sometimes you sing, “Jesus, Lover of my soul”; and at other times, “I am a stranger here below.” Sometimes you ask, “My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Sometimes you sing, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.” The stringed instruments these new songs perfectly accord with are the instruments God has prepared, strung, and tuned. The word “instrument” is translated from a word meaning “prepared.” Our songs are sung to that which God has prepared. We find recorded in Proverbs 16:1, “The preparations of the heart in man and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord.” When the Lord strings and tunes the hearts of His people there is perfect harmony in their experiences. When you experience harmonizes with the experience of Hezekiah, Jacob, Paul, and others whose lives are recorded in the Bible, it is singing your songs to the stringed instruments. When you experience harmonizes with the fundamental principles expressed in the Scriptures, and held sacred by your brethren, it accords with the stringed instruments. Pianos and organs are made, strung, and tuned by man. These may be damaged, get out of tune, and the strings broken. Natural musical instruments only give forth natural mechanical tones. The instruments under consideration give forth spiritual godly melody. The command to the Church is to “speak to yourselves, singing,” – not, to play a mechanical instrument. The question should be, “Is our singing to accord with the mechanical instruments or spiritual instruments? Is our singing to be in accord with the piano, organ, or heart?” I am persuaded the singing should be in harmony with our hearts that God had prepared, tuned and strung; thus, “Making melody in the heart.” When brethren are blessed to come together and sing with the

Spirit and understanding in sweet fellowship and harmony it is much greater and sweeter melody than the best of singing without the Spirit accompanied by the best mechanical musical instruments. The accompaniment of mechanical musical instruments is pleasing to the natural ear. The accompaniment of the Spirit and understanding is pleasing to the spiritual ear. We read in the Psalms of the harps of God, and also in Revelations. According to Josephus and what we can find in the Scriptures, these harps had ten strings. We can call your attention to Psalm 33:2-3: "Praise the Lord with harp; sing unto Him with psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto Him a new song." We want to quote the following stanzas from the hymn "There is a fountain": Lord, I believe thou has prepared (Unworthy though I be) For me a blood-bought free reward – A golden harp for. 'Tis strung and tuned for endless years And formed by power divine To sound in God the Father's ears No other name but thine. Hezekiah stated in the same chapter from which the text of this article was taken, "He hath both spoken unto me and himself hath done it" (Isa. 38:15). Here is a double. He commanded, "Set thine house in order," and He performed the command Himself by setting it in order. He works both the will and the do. Children of God receive "of the Lord's hand double" (Isa. 40:2). Scores of doubles come to our mind that neither time nor space will permit us to mention. Suffice it to suggest that the harp of God consists of a number of double strings. If the harps used back at that time under the ceremonial worship had ten strings, the spiritual harp must have five doubles which results in ten. Let us turn to the 8th chapter of Romans to find these five principles of the doctrine briefly stated. As we read them let us keep in mind that He has both spoken and Himself hath done it. Now, "For whom He did (1) foreknow, He also did (2) predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover

whom He did predestinate, them He also (3) called and whom He called them he also (4) justified: and whom He justified, them He also (5) glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:29-31). This foreknowledge is an intimate relationship with His people even before the manifestation of His decrees in time. He chose them in His Son. "Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there were none of them" (Psalm 139:16). He knew them in eternity; they shall know Him in time. He predestinated them to be conformed to the image of His Son. He has ordered, arranged, and fixed all things to fall out at appointed times and seasons so that all things work together for the fulfillment of this grand purpose. See Romans 8:28. He calls and they shall answer. He performs the double as the word that goes forth out of His mouth returns not to Him void, but accomplishes that which He pleases and prospers in the thing whereunto He sends it. He decreed the justification of His people and He justified them by sending His Son into the world to pay the penalty for their sins, thus satisfying justice. The just bore the sins of the unjust that justice divine might be perfectly satisfied. He not only justified them but also glorified them through the divine righteousness of His own Son. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled (justified) to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved (glorified) by His life" (Rom. 5:10). We are glorified by the imputed righteousness of His Son. These five wonderful things are both spoken and performed by God the Father, Son, and the Spirit. These ten strings ring clear the melodious song of praise to Him. The ten-stringed harp becomes ours when it pleases God to give it to us that we receive it with praise and thanksgiving. Then we are harpers harping with their harps. See Revelation 14:2. We have the

harps of God (Rev. 15:2). We sing to the accompaniment of these harps in the "house of the Lord," Zion, the new Jerusalem, the Church, or with the children of God. We sing "all the days of our life." Sometimes the day is gloomy because of the clouds of trouble and despondency which hides the view of the brightness of the Son of Glory. Sometimes the day is cold because of the felt sense of our unworthiness. We experience cloudy and bright days; but, they are all days because it takes the light to manifest the darkness that is in our heart and the coldness in our thoughts. Nevertheless the expression of days in the plural shows that there are night times in our experience. We hand our harps upon the willows by the river, Babylon, during the nights of our experience (Psalms 137). We have no use or regard for the Lord, nor Zion nor His people during the night. We are then resting in our own carnality and we are at ease. We do not think upon Zion nor His people. We forget Zion as is intimated in the expression, "We wept when we remembered Zion" (Ps. 137:1). When the dwellers in Babylon require of us in mirth to sing one of the songs of Zion, we are made to realize we cannot sing the Lord's song in a strange land. We must be brought again out of Babylon into Zion before we have any more use for the harp. It is not in the night that we feel unworthy, unfit, and so wretched but on dark and cloudy days. In the night we have no feeling, no sense of guilt, no deep concern over our spiritual welfare, neither any regard for His house. It is when we are awakened in the morning that we are made to weep because of our forgetfulness and unconsciousness of His providential care over us. It is when we are awakened by His Spirit before the rising of the Son of glory. Thanks be to God, when the son rises and we see the brightness of His face whose rays warm and calm our troubled breasts, fear is driven from our souls and love springs forth. Songs of praise again are sung to His matchless and glorious name for His amazing grace

toward us. You notice that Hezekiah says “our life” in the text. It seems to the natural mind that he should have said, “my life” or “our lives” to have been consistent with the proper usage of language. Let us see. The Lord added unto his life. My life had its end as my life when the Lord added His life to my life. My natural life ended as only a natural life when the Lord added that which is spiritual to my life. The life of a child of God prior to regeneration (or the addition of the graces of His Holy Spirit) is only a lustful fleshly life. After God adds that which is spiritual it becomes our life. When the Lord adds His Spirit there is set up a dual character in one. This results in a warfare. The flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh so that you cannot do the things that you would, these being contrary one to the other. See Gal. 5:17. What the Lord adds is contrary to that naturally possessed. One more thought and I shall close. The last night will be when death shall come at the end of our sojourn here. Then will be the dawning of the final day when we awaken in His likeness and shall be satisfied. There will be no night there but on eternal Day of perfect joy and peace. No cloudy and cold times to mar our peace. There will be no night nor river of Babylon. There will be no hanging of harps in the willows. We will all sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb harmoniously to the harps of God forever and forever. Signs of the Times, Vol. 163, No. 5, May 1995

WHAT SHALL I CRY?

February, 1953 PLEASE GET your bible and open to the 40th chapter of Isaiah and read the entire chapter. May the Lord now enable us to meditate together upon this Scripture using the first part of the 6th verse as basis for our meditations:

"The voice said, 'Cry,' and he said, 'What shall I cry?'" Cry means to utter, proclaim, groan, shriek or speak. When you cry it is involuntarily brought about by a stimulus that causes you to speak, proclaim, and say things that, were it not for this stimulating influence, you would not utter. We believe that the "Spirit of the Lord" is the stimulating influence that prompts God's people to cry. When the "Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon" us it prompts the opposite cry from that of the spirit of man. (See 7th verse). There is such a drastic change brought about by the direct operation of the Spirit that there always is a question. A question intimates that you do not know. When the Spirit fell upon them on the day of Pentecost they asked, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). When it arrested Paul on the way to Damascus he asked "Who art thou Lord?" and, "What wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:5-6). Those who were pricked at heart by the Spirit on the day of Pentecost did not ask what may we do? But "what shall we do?" Paul did not ask, what do you want me to do? But, "what wilt thou have me to do?" The one in the text did not ask, what may I cry? But "What shall I cry?" All upon whom the Spirit of the Lord has blown are made to realize that God has all power and that they have no power. They are made to realize that "He speaks and it is done; He commands and it stands fast." When I was identified with another order of religion I outlined my sermons before-hand and delivered them according to outline. I knew what to cry because the Spirit had not withered my flesh and caused my goodliness to fade. I was certain, sure and proud of myself. Since my flesh withered until I have no power and the goodliness thereof faded until I have no self righteousness, I have been entirely dependent upon God to give me at the self-same hour light of thought and liberty of speech. I go groaning, wondering, "What shall I cry?" (I trust this has been brought about by the Spirit of the Lord blowing upon me.) It has already been intimated that those who cry the Truth do so because of the

stimulating influence of the Holy Spirit. They wonder what to cry because they have nothing of themselves to cry. When the voice says, "Cry," they know they must cry. I am persuaded that every time the Voice commands to cry the child of God does cry that which God puts in his mouth. Now, "What shall I cry?" "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass" (Isaiah 40:6- 7). How is all flesh as grass? The grass withers. Therefore, all flesh withers. How is all the goodliness of the flesh as the flower? The flower fadeth. Therefore, all the righteousness of the flesh fadeth. What causes the flesh to wither and the righteousness thereof to fade? The Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it. Has the Spirit of the Lord ever blown upon you? If your natural power has so withered that you realize you cannot lift yourself up to the extent to be approved of God I am persuaded that the Spirit has blown upon you. If all your righteousness has faded in beauty that it appears as filthy rags, I am convinced that the Spirit has blown upon you. "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (Isaiah 64:6). What shall I cry concerning all nations as a whole? Can they combine and unite their strength and accomplish anything of their own power? Let us see. All nations are "counted as the small dust of the balance" (Isa. 40:15). The small dust upon the balances that the merchant uses in weighing his commodities are so insignificant that no purchaser would ask the merchant to remove the small dust from the balances before weighing in order that what he has purchased would weigh less. If all nations combined would be so insignificant, what would one man be? We are to cry that they are less than that! (Isaiah 40:7). "All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than

nothing and vanity." If all nations are counted to Him as nothing and less than nothing–what would one man be counted as? Using the expression of the late Elder A.D. Wall of Amity, Arkansas, "Nothing split open and both halves thrown away, would be about the best way I know to express the size of one man's power as counted by God." Who can boast of the power and righteousness of puny man in the face of these startling statements! God forbids His people to boast of their righteousness and power because of the withering and fading effects brought about by the Spirit. What shall I cry concerning God? "It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers." "That bringeth the princes to nothing; He maketh the judges of the earth as vanity" (Isa. 40:22-23). He did this to Hezekiah though he was a king. Each and every one upon whom the Spirit blows (read v. 24) is brought to nothing and vanity whether they be king, prince, judge, rich or poor, bond or free, - regardless of their status in this world they are all brought to the same low level. What shall I cry concerning that which God does for those upon whom He hath blown His Spirit to wither and fade into faintness and weariness? "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength" (v. 29). When their life ends; He adds His life. (See Isaiah 38:5). When their power becomes as vanity He gives His power. When they are weak then they become strong in the Lord. When the Lord is your strength you run and do not become weary because "He is strong in power; not one faileth" (v. 26). What shall I cry to the Lord's people? "Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arms, and carry them in His bosom." I am persuaded that Jesus and the Spirit are the strong arm and hand that shall rule for Him in the lives of His people. He

gathers, carries, and feeds those that are His. Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost. It is not left upon the volition of the creature to find God. This is the work of the strong arm and hand of God. He carries them in His bosom. They were chosen in Him before time began. They are bone of His bone. None of these shall fail for the Lord carries them and feeds them. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (St. John 10:27-29). We see the certainty of all the sheep of God hearing the voice, following after, and persevering unto life eternal without the loss of one. What shall I cry to Jerusalem, God's people? "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins" (Isa. 40:1-2). Take notice that the cry is to be made only to God's people. This cry is to be of comfort to the church–or those whom He hath called out. God's ministry tells her that Jesus was the lone Warrior who accomplished this warfare by fulfilling the requirements of the law in her stead. He is a Warrior in whom God was well pleased. He came to "give eternal life to as many as thou hast given Him" (St. John 17:2). "And this is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (1 John 5:11). Not only did He accomplish our warfare but also paid the penalty for our iniquity! He suffered and died that Holy Justice might be perfectly satisfied, the penalty for our sins fully paid; that we might appear before His judgment seat with a record without blemish. He did not stop by just accomplishing the law for us, which would have left us with our sins against us. Neither did He only atone for our sins, which would have left the task to

us of strictly obey the ten commandments with all of its supporting laws. But, He performed double for us. He reconciled us unto the Father by His death, and He also saves us by His life. (See Rom. 5:10). We receive of the Lord's hand double in all things pertaining to eternal life. He speaks and also does it. He commands and causes it to come to pass. Jesus is Author and Finisher of our faith. He works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. He commands to repent, and gives you repentance. He says, "Awake," and awakens you. He commands to live, and gives you life. He says, "Come unto me," and draws you to Him. He says "Hear," and gives you a hearing ear. He says, "Cry," and puts the words into your moth to cry. He says to Zion, "Get thee up into the high mountains," and sets them on high. What shall I then cry concerning the salvation of God's people? I must cry that salvation is solely by the grace of God through the merits of Jesus Christ both in time and unto eternity. I must do as Jonah, acclaim that salvation is of the Lord. I must cry that it is certain and sure to each and every one of the subjects of His amazing grace. I must cry that boasting is excluded. I must praise Him for His wonderful goodness to the children of men. In Him we move and have our being. The breath that we breathe belongs to Him. Even natural possessions are in His hand and He distributeth them to whomsoever He will. All the hairs of your head are numbered by Him and not even a sparrow falls without Him. What shall I cry to the discouraged? God providentially cares for you and so sovereignly controls all things that they work together for your good. God has a noble purpose for you to fulfill in life and He will so protect you and guide you that you will completely fulfill this purpose before He takes you from this sojourn of sin and sorrow. Even though you feel so insignificant, God's purpose in your being here is just as important as the greatest ministerial gift that has ever graced the pulpit. May God bless you to take courage with

these thoughts and press on toward the mark of the prize of the high calling – looking unto Jesus who is the Author and Finisher of this precious faith. God has so arranged, fixed and decreed that we have need of each other and we do serve one another; thereby serving Christ. (See Matt. 25:31-40). We are made to do as Paul–thank God for the brethren. What shall I cry concerning our conduct one toward another? Forgive a brother his trespasses as our heavenly Father hath forgiven us. Esteem a brother higher than ourselves. Do good unto all men; especially unto the Household of Faith. As much as in you is, live peaceably with all men. Do unto them as you would have them do unto you. "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:8-10). "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief or as an evil doer, or as a busy body in other men's matters – yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Peter 4:15-16). As the body has need of each and every one of its members, so the church has need of each other. What shall I cry to God? "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:1, 10). Perform for me that my walk and conversation may be godly in this life. "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion." Cause strife and confusion to cease–if it be Thy will–that God's little children may live together in sweet fellowship one with another. Cause us to be content with our lot and reconciled unto Thy will. Give us this day our daily bread. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Finally, save us in

that eternal abode where and when all will be peace, love, joy, and fellowship forever and ever is the prayer that we beseech in the name of Jesus Christ who art Thy Son, and our Redeemer. Amen

BACKSLIDING ISRAEL, AND HOPE OF RESTORATION

July, 1953 "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him." (Hosea 14:4). The above quotation is a stated promise of God to raise again each and every one of His people from backsliding; and his reason for such a wonderful promise. May God grant us, first, to meditate upon backsliding; and then, discuss the reason for this promise; finally, study the certainty of this promise being fulfilled. A thorough understanding of what is meant by the term backsliding is necessary before we can determine whether or not we have experienced it. If the true meaning is revealed to us from the Lord and we have experienced it, then, not until then, we will truly know what it means. Backsliding is falling from or sliding back from a higher position you once occupied. Sliding back is returning toward a lower position from which you were once raised. Have you experienced it? Have you experienced the backsliding heart? Solomon says in Proverbs 14:14, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways..." The heart being the seat of affection (or love) sometimes becomes cold and leaves the "first love" as did the church at Ephesus. "Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love" (Rev. 2:4). Have you experienced a falling from the joy of salvation and made to pray as David, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation" (Psalms 51:12). Have you ever fallen from the sweet enjoyment of that precious faith in Christ to such an

extent that you are finally made to cry, “Help thou mine unbelief?” (Mark 9:24). Do you ever question and pray as Cowper expresses in the hymn we sometimes sing: “Where is the blessedness I knew When first I saw the Lord? Where is the soul-refreshing view Of Jesus and his word? What peaceful hours I then enjoyed! How sweet their memory still! But now I find an aching void The world can never fill. Return, O holy Dove, return Sweet messenger of rest; I hate the sins that cause my mourn, And so disturb my breast.” We are made to realize an aching vacancy caused by the absence of the Holy Spirit that once so wonderfully calmed our troubled breast. Sometimes we cherished the memories of the soul-stirring experiences we once had and long for their return. We fall into many temptations and wonder if God has forgotten to be gracious. We get so cold and lifeless in our feelings that when we attend church, converse, and sing with the brethren we are convinced that our actions are mere formality and the very essence of hypocrisy! I am persuaded that each and every one of God’s little children many times experience this backsliding of heart when the brethren do not see anything amiss in their conduct. This backsliding in heart is the experiences within the child of God that effects his conscience and inner thinking that sometimes results in great turmoil within that is not necessarily made manifest at all times in conduct. Inward backsliding results in great grief to the person experiencing it, while backsliding in conduct affects others. We now want to consider backsliding in conduct. When the walk and conversation of a child of God is contrary to that which is becoming to His saints, backsliding in conduct is experienced. Sometimes our conduct grieves the brethren and causes them to lose confidence in our sincerity and profession. Sometimes our conduct is so obviously ungraceful that it “gives occasion for the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.” Read the 11th and 12th chapters on 2nd Samuel, which give an account of

David's disgraceful conduct, Nathan's conversation with David, and David's confession; and you note an outstanding example of backsliding in conduct. You will also see why this terrible sin haunted David all through his life even though he repented and was given the promise that he would not die. Read the 22nd chapter of St. Luke and you will find that Peter was delivered to Satan for a sifting and that Peter denied three times that he had any knowledge of Jesus, even though Peter had affirmed that he would follow Jesus into prison and death. One of the writers said that he cursed and swore. Peter fell from the remembrance of his oath to Jesus and what Jesus had told him he (Peter) would do. This outward unbecoming conduct of Peter proved to him his utter inability of himself to stand, even though he had once been enabled to stand. Past grace does not suffice for the present or future. When God withholds His grace (unmerited divine favor) from us, we are as certain to fall as Peter and David did. When we are shown that we are in this fallen state it causes us to do as Peter: "weep bitterly"; and to greatly yearn and pray for the lifting up that only the unmerited divine favor of God can perform. We stumble and fall so often that we are made to pray to God to give us grace, give us grace! Thanks be to God that, "We have access by faith into this grace, wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). Paul gave the experiences in the travel of the Israelites (in the 10th chapter of the 1 Corinthians) to warn us that even though we be baptized into Jesus Christ and into his death, have eaten of the spiritual meat and have drunk of the spiritual drink, that we may murmur, commit fornication, tempt Christ, be an idolater, and thus not be well pleasing unto God. (1 Cor. 10:5). All this happened to Israel for ensamples or types and are written in the scriptures for our admonition. (I Cor. 10:11). Paul exhorted the brethren to flee from these ungodly things.

John was ordered of the Lord to write to the seven churches of Asia pointing out to each church it characteristics-some of which were not very becoming-exhorting them to repent or turn from their heretical departings from doctrine and practice. God-called, God-qualified, God-sent, and God-used ministers of this age exhort and admonish brethren and churches to turn from these unscriptural doctrines and practices which are of men, and to implore God's grace to lift them by His power from the fallen state in which they are in. The spirit of jealousy prompts brethren and ministers to stir up strife and confusion and falsely accuse brethren. Self-conceit prompts some to stubbornly contend for their petty opinions to the extent of causing divisions. Ministers and members of the church seeking praise of men and self-exaltation design and scheme, using the corrupt tactics of politics, to set themselves on coveted high places, to the destruction of the peace in the church and churches. Bars of fellowship are raised under the false cloak of standing for "right order and doctrine". These things ought not to be! May God fulfill His promise to heal our backsliding. May God enable us to see our many faults, confess them to our brethren and repent. May we seek to unite instead of divide; acknowledge our wrongs instead of justifying ourselves for unbecoming actions; forgive our brethren instead of taking vengeance; esteem them instead of considering them less than we; do good unto them instead of evil; yes, love them instead of hating. It must be revealed unto us that we are at fault before we can desire to be rid of it. It must be proven to us through sad experience that we cannot rid ourselves from these ungodly actions before we can sincerely pray to God for deliverance. He hears our cry and will fulfill His promise by healing our backsliding. His promise to heal our backsliding is positive and sure. He says, "I will" [not, I may or I can], heal their backsliding." It is God that does it and His people are made to know it by revelation and experience.

It is because of God's great love for us and that freely (without merit) given that we are lifted up by His grace from these backslidden positions. We do not deserve it, but He raises us up and sets us on high. We deserve to be cast down to never rise again, but, because of His great love, God extends His mercy toward us, lifting us up many times so that we do not fall finally away. Have your thoughts been so sinful and your actions so ungodly that you felt it would be unjust for God to forgive you? Notwithstanding this just banishment you deserved, God's anger was turned from you and you again experienced God's mercy and grace. Why? "For mine anger is turned away from him." God's anger was appeased. His anger was not withdrawn without due punishment. This punishment was turned from God's people upon His only begotten Son, Christ Jesus. He bore the punishment for our sins, past, present, and future, that we might enjoy His mercy. If Christ was punished on account of so many sins, is it a great thing that we should be scourged, chastened, and rebuked by Him in order that we be corrected, brought into the right path, and learn obedience by the things we suffer? His promise is to do an effectual work of it. It is because of God's love for us that we are chastened by the rod of correction. It is because of His wonderful love that we are forgiven of our many sins. If God forgave us so much, is it a great thing for us to forgive those who trespass against us? Our sins are so great that when we are enabled to behold our true position regarding holiness, the little offences of our brethren sink into insignificance and unimportance. We are then in the position to forgive our brethren. We can then pray from the heart, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." When it has been revealed unto us that God is so merciful to us then we are merciful unto those with whom we come in contact. When the love of God dwells in our hearts it causes us to have love one for the other and to manifest it in our

actions and conversation. These graceful experiences quoted above show that he fulfills His promise to heal our backsliding. Time will not permit us dwelling longer upon this subject in our written meditations; and it is needless to say that volumes of our thoughts while writing are unexpressed because of the infirmity of not being able to write as fast as thoughts come into the mind. We trust, however, that God will bless you to glean some edification and comfort from the words that are written. May He enable us to see our own faults instead of the petty faults of our brethren, that we may be meek, humble, and lovely in our walk and conversation. May He heal our backsliding that we may be raised up closer unto Him and to each other. May we be enabled to repent-individuals and churches-that there might be uniting instead of dividing. Signs of the Times, Vol. 121, No. 7, July 1953

“THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF THE ORACLES OF GOD”

Hebrews 5:12 January, 1954 The title of this article is part of the twelfth verse of the fifth chapter of Hebrews. Before meditating upon the principles as recorded in the first part of the sixth chapter of Hebrews, we desire to understand the meaning of the expression. May God bless us with the leadership of His Spirit that we may be edified in this attempt. The first principles are the primary, fundamental phases of the truth which compose the foundation upon which all further developments must be founded. They are the first experiences of the work of the Holy Spirit. The gracious act of God in translating us out of darkness into light, converting our souls, establishing our belief, setting our feet upon the Rock, changing our desires, causing us to confess Him as our Savior, etc., are the first principles to be experienced, understood, believed, and relied upon. This

work must be-and is-perfectly wrought out by God and instilled in us before it pleases Him that we should further grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and our place in running the race that is set before us. These first principles so equip us that when the time comes for us to "put our hand to the plow" that we look not back but persevere in hope upon the path that is set before us-looking forward. What God does is forever done. There is no need of any of it ever being redone. "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection; not laying again the foundation of (1) repentance from dead works, (2) faith toward God, (3) the doctrine of baptisms, (4) laying on of hands, (5) resurrection of the dead, (6) eternal judgment (See Heb. 6:1). These principles enumerated have already been perfectly laid in the foundation of our experience. An attempt to lay them again would be an attempt to crucify the Son of God afresh which would be an open shame. Away with the idea that anything God has done for us has to be redone! If it were possible for one of His children to fall from these first principles it would be impossible to renew them to repentance unless Christ be re-crucified! "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10). He was crucified once for all God's people and once for all times. These first principles have to be delivered once to the saints. Before dealing directly with these first principles, let us consider what is meant by the oracles of God. Things uttered, spoken, or revealed by God are the oracles of God. When God spake it was done; when He commanded it stood fast. These first principles then to be considered are things that God has uttered, spoken or revealed. They are not things that man has found out by searching but things that God is pleased to reveal to His children. It may be necessary that we speak many times before we are given a hearing but God speaks once. He spoke and this earth came into existence. He said, "Let there

be light," and there was light. He spoke natural life into creatures. He speaks spiritual life into His children. When it pleases Him to establish His children in these first principles by laying the foundation it need not be laid again. God speaks to His people in all things. The earth, the sun, the moon, and the stars bespeak the wisdom and power of God. Each one so precisely moves in its destined path so minutely timed that there is no variation. Has God ever spoken to you through these great things and caused you to stand in awe admiring Him in them? I have heard people in relating their experiences tell of these things as well as the trees of the forest, the flowers of the field, the birds of the air –all were singing praises of Him. He speaks through insects of His providence. I have stood in amazement and watched bees as they went from bloom to bloom in gathering their food, thinking how God has provided for man's food in using these insects for proper pollination that a greater harvest from these plants may result. God speaks. He speaks in dreams, visions, circumstances, troubles, and the Scriptures. Have you not had a dream that when you were awakened and caused to meditate upon it that you felt surely that it was God speaking directly to you? God spake to Joseph in a dream (Gen. 37:5-6). Sometimes He reveals Himself to you in the dead hours of night when the faculties of your mind and body are inactive in sleep. Sometimes when you are wide awake naturally, going about your daily activities, it pleases God to appear to you in a vision. You see something with the spiritual eye so real that you forget what you are doing and you are completely absorbed in meditation on the picture revealed. Sometimes you behold and hear Him in all your environment. All creatures you see; all acts you behold; all words uttered; all thoughts of your mind; – all sometimes bespeak God. Sometimes He speaks to you in troubles. Have you not been calmed in the midst of the greatest of your troubles and made to realize that God used these troubles as

chariots upon which to ride to you and speak sweet peace to your troubled breast. Then is when you can truly thank Him for trouble. He speaks directly to you through the Scriptures. I have tried to read and meditate upon the Scriptures many times when it would be mere formality and the words would be dead and without meaning. Sometimes portions of Scriptures so arrest my attention and the words read seem so alive and forceful, penetrating every fiber of my being, that I am made to say, "God is speaking to me." God speaks to us through His gospel ministers, our brethren and friends, and through their deeds of kindness to us. Have you not watched people all around you drinking joyfully words that fell from a preacher's mouth when it seemed dry to you? At other times it seems the words are being spoken especially for your benefit. When the minister's exhortations are piercing and affect you so much, it is God speaking to you. Sometimes, a brother in private conversation with you makes a remark that is indelibly stamped on your mind that you never forget –it seems God spake through this brother to you! A casual expression of appreciation spoken to you by a friend so encourages you that you are caused to lay aside all things that discourage and go on. A deed of kindness rendered you by a friend in the face of the fact that you feel to be so unworthy of his notice stimulates you with new courage and your hope is renewed. Many times I have been so greatly depressed and felt to deserve a frown from every one that a smile from the face of a friend directed to me raised me up and gave me new courage. Could this be God speaking to me through the smile of a friend? This line of thought seems to have no end so must conclude it by saying, God speaks to us through all when and how it pleases Him. We wish to meditate now upon the first principles in the order given in Heb. 7:1. The first is repentance from dead works. Repentance is a sorrow for anything past which denotes a change of mind. Repentance is a turning from one

desire, work, or trust to an opposite one. Repentance in this case consists of being convinced that these dead works are sin; sorrow for them, confession of them, hatred to them, and renunciation of them. Repentance being a change of mind denotes a change from the fleshly or carnal mind to the spiritual mind. When the spirit of natural man, the carnal mind, is wrought upon by the Spirit of God, there is a change of mind or true repentance. I am persuaded that there is a godly repentance and there is a fleshly repentance. Sometimes we may mistake one for the other. Let us contrast them. One is God-given and the other is the work of the flesh. One is the daily exercise of the true Christian which never vanishes and the other is temporary. One is the result only o a sense of danger and fear of wrath and the other is a true mourning for sin and an earnest desire of deliverance from it. One produces a change in heart and life and the other can be only an outward appearance of change. The recipient of true God-given repentance denies himself and looks to God for his strength and the one actuated by fleshly repentance trusts in himself to effect a reformation that he might have a higher standing with those around him. May God bless us to discern between the two. Now, let us contrast dead works and that to which you are turned. You are turned from the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21) to the fruit of the Spirit, having crucified the affections and lusts of the flesh. See Gal. 5:22-24. Your desires have been changed from outward, formal lifeless ceremonies to trust in the inner-workings of God's Spirit in affecting an experience of grace. You have been turned from depending upon self to depend upon God. Your desires are turned from fulfilling the lusts of the flesh to desire to do the will of God. You are turned from sin unto holiness. The process of change from death unto life is the first of the first principles experienced by the child of God. The second of the first principles is faith toward God. You repent from dead works to faith toward

God. This faith is God-given and abiding. It causes you to look forward, not backward, because "Faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." This substance is the essential part or characteristic God has endowed you with that causes you to look beyond this veil of human flesh and inspires you with hope of something better in the future. This faith is the evidence of something supernatural in you that cannot clearly be seen because of the darkness of wretched sinful flesh. How you do yearn to come into its full possession and, reality! You must have this substance and evidence before you can truly believe. You cannot believe anything you want to believe. You must have sufficient evidence. I may want to believe I have ten thousand dollars. If my banker should mail me a duplicate slip showing that ten thousand dollars had been deposited to my credit and it properly signed with his signature, it would be the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. I would have the evidence that it was there for me even though I had not seen one dollar of it. I would hope to realize it by procuring with it the things I would need. This faith we are talking about is far superior to the faith in the wealth of this world. This faith is toward God, not toward money. Do you have faith in God? To the extent that you trust in your own ability and righteousness, you do not have faith in God. If you have been made to have no confidence in the flesh and realize that all goodness must come from Him, I am persuaded that you have faith in God. God, the Father, chose His people and predestinated them unto salvation; God, the Son, accomplished their salvation for them by fulfilling the law and paying the penalty for sin with His blood, arose again and is now interceding for them; God, the Spirit, regenerates, reveals, calls, comforts, and edifies His people as they sojourn here and will finally be the means of quickening the mortal bodies into eternal life in the resurrection. The third of the first principles is the doctrine of

baptisms. These baptisms are the different phases of the one baptism. The baptism that is essential unto salvation is "By one spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). This one body is Jesus Christ as we see in Romans 6:3, "Know ye not that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death!" Primarily we were baptized in Him when we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. Experimentally we are baptized by the Spirit in many experiences of the different phases of the doctrine of baptisms. John preached the baptism of repentance which is being immersed in God-given repentance (Mark 1:4). He baptized in water all who brought forth the evidence that they had been baptized with repentance. There is the baptistm with the Holy Ghost and the baptism with fire spoken of in Matthew 3:11. The fire of God's vengeance burns the dross and purifies as silver. The Holy Ghost baptizes the soul in regeneration and will baptize the body of His saints with immortality in the resurrection. The baptism of suffering is experienced by God's people (Matt. 20:22-23). Baptism in water is a figure of the baptism of Christ into death and the trust of our lot in the same and has its saving effect. In 1st Peter 3:21 we read, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." The good conscience is the Holy Ghost conscience which is in contrast to the natural conscience. The good conscience always results in the proper answer. When the good conscience directly commands an individual to follow Jesus in baptism in water the result is the individual is baptized and he feels that he has done the bidding of his Master. The fourth of these first principles is the laying on of hands. Laying on of hands denotes imputation of power and authority. God has promised to "turn His hand upon the little ones" (Zech. 12:7). After one has been converted and made to become as

a little child, God "Upholds him with His hand" (Ps. 37:24). One is made to humble himself "Under the mighty hand of God" that he may be exalted in due time. See 1 Peter 5:6. Job was brought into close contact with the hand of God and was made to exclaim, "The hand of God hath touched me." The hands of God are the hand of judgment and the hand of mercy, the hand that kills and the hand that makes alive, the hand that wounds and the hand that heals. He kills and makes alive; He wounds and heals; He renders judgment and extends mercy. You are besieged with these reverse experiences in your experience of grace. The fifth of the first principles is the resurrection of the dead. Those who are dead in trespasses and sins are raised up from performing dead works to depend upon the performance of the Spirit. The dead are raised to newness of life when they are translated out of darkness into His marvelous light as a result of this holy calling. The soul has been quickened and made new which we might term as the resurrection of the soul. This is the first fruits of resurrection or the earnest of the inheritance. This first experience gives you hope of the same thing being done to your mortal bodies. The making new of the soul causes you to realize the infirmities of the flesh so that your desire is that it be immortalized in the resurrection. The holiness that is infused into your heart in the resurrection of the soul causes you to see how sinful are the deeds of the body that you anxiously desire its immortalization which shall be experienced in the resurrection. The brilliance of the light experienced in the first fruits of the Spirit makes you to see how gross is the darkness of your finite being so that you pray for it to be made new. The sixth of the first principles of the oracles of God is eternal judgment. One phase of judgment is decree. You are made to realize the decrees of God are eternal. God had His decrees in eternity, embracing all things and events and no variation or change can come to frustrate one of His

eternal decrees. Chastisements inflicted on saints is another phase of judgment as seen in 1 Peter 4:17, "Judgment must begin at the house of God." This phase of judgment is everlasting in the experience of God's people as long as they tabernacle here for we never get beyond this in this life. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, or shall be delivered according to the wisdom and equity of God, and through the infliction of punishment on God's Son (Isaiah 1:27). God's judgment is not temporary but eternal. It never has been changed and never will be. What He judges is eternal. The decree can never be altered. There is no higher court for a new hearing. Space nor time will permit us going into these things as we would like, but may God bless you to glean a few thoughts from this to His praise is the prayer of one who feels to be less than the least of all saints.

"WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?"

James 4:14 April, 1954 Your natural life is "a vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away." You cannot say with assurance that you will be living tomorrow. As vapour only appears within certain circumstances and conditions upon which the vapour has no control, so is your life. When these circumstances and conditions are changed your life vanishes as the vapour. The flowing of the blood, the functioning of the mind, and the movement of the muscles are evidences of natural life. This life is given upon the volition of the will of God and it is taken at His appointed time. When the mind ceases to function, the muscles to move, and the blood to flow; a person is pronounced naturally dead. This natural life is timely. It has its beginning and it has its ending. It is a true Biblical saying that "Life is in the blood." The expression in Leviticus 17:11 says, "the life

of the flesh is in the blood." The flow of the blood stimulates the muscles and mind. When there is a change in the flow of the blood there is a change in the functioning of the mind and movement of the muscles. Heart stimulants affect mind and muscle. When one is under the influence of alcohol, which stimulates the flow of blood, it is often truly said, "He is not himself". His actions and conversation are changed. The Lord willing, we desire to meditate upon the functioning of the natural mind before comparing and contrasting natural and spiritual life. We want to say to the reader who is wondering what our object is in this treatise that we desire to prove a true and experienced state of life that exists in the regenerated child of God; why that regeneration is necessary; how that Jesus is our life; and, divine eternal life. The nature of the natural mind is to function within a natural realm. This nature would have to be changed before it could act within the spiritual realm. We reason according to our understanding. When we have only natural understanding our reasoning is according to natural wisdom. Our affections by nature are carnal, earthly, and sensual-bent on gratifying self. The approval or disapproval of the natural mind is based on a natural conscience which is forever changing with the changes of social customs and ideas. The will of the natural mind chooses that which is evil, indulges in the lusts of the flesh, and chooses to please self. This is the mind of natural life. What is your life? Have you been elevated above that which is natural to such an extent that you are never bothered with this old nature, conscience, will, understanding, or affections? Have you been wrought upon in such a way that you are living a pure, holy, spiritual life, void of fleshly inclinations? Is your life so holy that you never have a doubt concerning your future abode? I must answer, "no" to all these questions. My experience proves that I possess a darkened understanding, an unregenerated will, and earthly affections. That which is born of the flesh is flesh

and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. There is a natural life and there is a spiritual life. I maintain that God's children who have been born again and are yet living in this natural world are characters who possess dual lives. This conforms to the expression of the prophet Isaiah, 38:20, "All the days of our life." "Our life" is an expression that is inconsistent with the proper usage of language unless it could mean two characters in one person. There is the Spirit of God and there is the spirit of man. As long as we live in this natural tabernacle we will be beset at times with this old depraved nature, hardened conscience, darkened understanding, unregenerated will, and earthly affections. God infuses eternal life into one of His children by His Spirit in enacting the new birth. When this is done the one being born again is given a new nature, an enlightened understanding, a new conscience, a renewed will, and heavenly affections. This act of God does not do away with his natural birth nor his natural life. To the regenerated, born again, child of God may I ask, "What is your life?" May I answer as God will direct God has added His life to your life. You are not only born of the flesh but of the Spirit. Yes, you are given a new nature by which you are enabled to see the depravity of your old nature. Your understanding is enlightened that you may realize the darkness of your natural understanding. You are given a will toward God and godliness that proves to you that your natural will is to choose evil rather than good. These heavenly affections that God has implanted in you shows how selfish and earthly are your natural affections. Has your life been changed. Yes, as a person. You do not esteem yourself as highly as you once did. This experience has humbled you and caused you to realize your dependence. You find that where as you were in peace with yourself there is now a warfare. The flesh is lusting against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. These are contrary one to the other so that you cannot do the things you would. Neither time nor space

would permit treating upon the extent of the change. May I ask another question? Has your flesh been purified, renovated, refined, or made better to know? No. Your experience is as Paul wrote to the Romans concerning himself, even though he had been graced by this new life being added to him. He expresses in Romans 7:19, "For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do." If you read his experience you will find that when he would do good, evil was present with him. You will find that sin was mixed with all he did. He realized that he served the law of sin with his flesh. He considered himself as chief of sinners, less than the least of saints, and a wretched man who needed and prayed for deliverance. He possessed the thorn of the flesh which was a messenger of Satan to buffet him about lest he be exalted above measure. He rejoiced in physical pains and personal persecutions but the indwelling workings of sin in his carnal mind, the opposition of his depraved nature to the grace of God, caused him to cry out concerning his wretched condition. You will find that Peter possessed his old nature after being so wonderfully blessed with such special divine gifts. His regenerated will was to follow Jesus to the extent of death but there was another characteristic abiding with him that resulted in his denying any knowledge of Christ, not just once but three times, confirming with an oath, cursing and swearing. Job abhorred himself. An old prophet considered himself as being a man of unclean lips. Many wonderfully gifted characters, whose experience is recorded in the Book of books, were affected with the same evil tendencies as you are. May I ask again, "What is your life?" Your life is a mixture of joys and sorrows. Sometimes you are on the mountain top rejoicing in the grace and love of God but so much of the time you are in the valley of woe. Sometimes your hope of eternal abode in heaven is so little that you wonder, "Do I have a hope?" And sometimes it is an anchor to the soul both sure and steadfast

that entereth within the veil. Sometimes you doubt you have grace; at other times you are convinced of His gracious care for you. Probably much of the time the Bible is a sealed book to you; but, sometimes it is as God speaking to you. Sometimes you want to talk of God's love for His people; but much of the time you are shut up and have no desire to meet one who believes in God. Sometimes the minister preaches directly to you with comfort and edification; but much of the time, though you try to listen, you are cold and lifeless. Why am I thus tossed and have this cross? You would depend upon the goodness of your own life were it not for this tossing to and fro that you experience. You must be given to know the vileness of your life, the weakness of your understanding, the deceit of your heart, the evil of your will, and the carnality of your affections before you can obey the command of Jesus to deny yourself. You must possess this cross of flesh against the Spirit before you can obey the command of Jesus, "Take up your cross." You must realize the vileness of your own life before you can be made submissive to Jesus' command, "Follow me." You must realize these infirmities through the remaining part of your life, else you would not pray for salvation from sin, look to God for grace, depend upon Jesus for your merits, or hope to be finally delivered from evil into the glorious liberty of the children of God. What is your life? Your natural life is in evidence when the flow of the blood stimulates the activity of the natural mind and the movement of the muscles. Your spiritual life is in evidence when the flow of the Spirit of God stimulates the spiritual mind (or heart) resulting in a godly walk and conversation. When the blood flows and the mind functions there is action of the muscles. When the Spirit flows, and the godly mind functions, there is action consisting of good works. These good works are done only by the stimulation of the Spirit of God. Thus it is by the grace of God that we are what we are. What is your life? "For ye are

dead and your life is hid with Christ In God; when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him In glory" (Col. 3:3-4). We have a foretaste of Christ appearing here in time which is glorious. These experiences last only for fleeting moments; but, the glory of them encourages us to press on with renewed hope and a strengthened faith. Christ is our life because we have been made to depend upon His righteousness. Christ is our life because He suffered the penalty of death, blotting out our sins by dying, that we might live. He is the Author of our spiritual life; the Fountain from whence flows the water of life; the Root of our godly life; and, He is our Head which stimulates a godly walk and conversation. "Your life is hid with Christ in God." Yes, your life is hid from the world. You cannot make known to the world the precious things of this life. You cannot cause the wise and the prudent to see it. It is hid from them. Jesus thanked God that He had hid these things from the wise and the prudent and revealed them unto babes. Your life is hid from the law in Christ. The law can have no dominion over you. Your sins are hid from God by the blood of Christ for it is impossible for Him to see your sins through the blood of His Son. Those who would destroy your hope and faith cannot because your life is hid with Christ. Is it not true that your eternal life is hid from you much of the time? Two of the three things that abide now, according to Paul's letter to the Church at Corinth, proves that your eternal life is hid from you. "Now abideth faith, hope, and charity" (1 Cor. 13:13). "Faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." If a thing is not seen it is hid. Paul said, "We are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom. 8:24-25). If we see not that which is hoped for it is hid. If then, we are saved by hope, surely our life is hid with Christ. Take courage,

brethren, and may God comfort you with the thought that now we see "through a glass, darkly; but then face to face." (1 Cor. 13:12). Sometimes His smiles are hidden from us. We grope about in darkness. Our minds are taken up with the vain things of this world so that we are made to realize, I am a stranger here below, And what I am 'tis hard to know, I am so vile, so prone to sin, I fear that I'm not born again. What is your life? You are a stranger to yourself. Your life is so hid that you are fearful that you are not born again. When He "shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him In glory." These foretastes of His appearing here in time renews our hopes and strengthens our faith. We wonder so much of the time, is He coming again? Our faith and hope is that when He appears we shall appear with Him in glory. We look forward to that grand appearing when He shall take us into that glorious home where we shall live and abide with Him eternally. What is eternal life? The word eternal indicates that this life under consideration is endless. It shall never cease but persevere without a break into an endless eternity. Those who possess this life shall never perish. They shall live forever without any danger of dying. No power is able to destroy it for this life is in Christ. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:12). This eternal life is interlinked in the golden chain of eternal life and includes therein all of God's chosen people for we read, "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John 17:23). The Father is in His Son, His Son is in His chosen. His chosen is in the Son and His Son is in the Father. This interlinking is why Jesus could say, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my father's hand" (St. John 10:28-29). The children of God are so interlinked in the Father and Son that it would be just as possible for God to be dethroned as

for one of them to perish or lose that life! It would be denying the power of God and blaspheming His Son to proclaim that any who have this eternal life shall ever be severed from it so that the second or eternal death shall have power over them! What is eternal life? "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). If you know God and know His Son, you have eternal life. If He has seen fit to reveal Himself to you, then you know Him. Peter had eternal life as was manifested in his answer to Jesus, recorded in Matt. 18:16, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This answer of Peter was given, not because he had learned it from flesh and blood, but because he had been divinely favored by a direct revelation from God as you shall see in reading the statement of Jesus following this answer. It takes the life of God imputed to an individual by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit to enable one to know God or Jesus Christ "He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). The revelation of God unto His people causes them to cease to believe in themselves, placing their trust in Him. This life of God imputed to you makes you lose confidence in yourself. This eternal life has saved the soul in regeneration and we are confident that the same spirit will save the body in the resurrection. The work of salvation that has been begun in us experimentally will surely be performed and perfected unto the deliverance of our bodies from sin and death. As this life immortalized the soul in regeneration, this life will immortalize the body in the resurrection. As we now have the first-fruits, being a foretaste, we shall come into full fruition in heaven. We shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberties of the children of God. What will be your life then? Your life will then be free from imperfections, warfares, tribulations, doubts, fears,

persecutions, thirst, hunger and confusions. You shall have uninterrupted joy, peace and happiness forevermore. There will be no dying as experienced daily in this life, but you shall live, live! live! What a wonderful and glorious life is eternal life! Signs of the Times, Vol. 163, No. 9.

GOLDEN CHAINS OF DIVINE TRUTH

July, 1954 "According to a well-ordered and unbroken chain of Thy providence" were words used in the introductory wording of a prayer by Elder J. L. Smith of Lillie, Louisiana that stimulated a sweet chain of meditations on the subject of this treatise. These inspiring thoughts were so sweet and sublime to me that I trust they were God-given. May God grant you to share some of them with me. We read in I Kings 6:21, where Solomon used "Chains of Gold" in the interior decorations of the Temple. Golden necklaces, or chains of gold, have been worn about the neck by women throughout the ages. We read in Genesis 41:42, of Joseph wearing "A gold chain about his neck." The lover spoke concerning the beauty or comeliness of His beloved in Songs of Solomon 1:10, thus: "Thy neck with chains of gold." Chains of gold have been used to confer honor and as a token of love from the beginning of time until now. It is a custom that has not been broken and is yet being used today. The significance of interlinking chains of gold demands awe and amazement from those who seriously consider it! Let us consider the different phases of Truth Divine as golden chains so interlinked together that they cannot be broken nor separated. A sister said to me some time ago, "A brain is as strong as its weakest think." I thought, "How weak my brain must be!" It is just as truly said, "A chain is as strong as its weakest link." All natural and carnal chains are broken

because of weak links. If the chain of salvation were contingent, depending upon the volition of righteousness of any carnal natural man as one of its links, it would certainly be broken. Man in his best state is but vanity and the best of his righteousness is as filthy rags in God's sight, according to the Bible. This certainly would not be golden! The chains we want to consider consists only of golden links. Gold is considered a precious metal. It is pure because it has been refined and all dross has been burned from it. We want to think of it as lasting. It is figurative of something Divine. It is figurative of something very valuable which is to be greatly desired. A chain is composed of links interlinked one with another. Each link is endless and so intertwined that each affects the other. One link cannot be moved without moving others. The chains of divine truth are so interlinked that one phase of truth embraces another so that none can be separated. We want to think of chains strong enough to reach down deep into the miry clay of sin and vileness and rescue helpless fallen sinners from their just condemnation. We want to think of chains having their existence in eternity as coming through time and into eternity. We want to consider the Golden Chain of the Godhead. Three golden links compose the chain of the God-head. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are so interlinked that they cannot be separated. "For there are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." (I John 5:7) They are one in purpose, power, and authority. The co-ordination of the God-head is so perfect that whatsoever the Father determined concerning the salvation of poor sinners the Son accomplished completely and the Spirit reveals. The Spirit is just as able to bring to poor sinners the knowledge of the truth as the Father is to determine and the Son to accomplish. They are in strict agreement. Do you think the Holy Spirit could fai1 in any degree to translate from darkness unto light anyone for

whom Christ died? If there should be any failure in any sense it would manifest a weak link in the chain. The Father determined certain ones to be saved; the Son was endowed with power to save; and, the Spirit makes the application. These are golden links that cannot be broken or altered. You may ask, "How can poor sinners be encouched in this golden chain?" Let us consider the interlinking of God's children. We call your attention to the prayer of Jesus as recorded in St. John 17:21 "As Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." Here is a three link chain so intertwining the children of God with the Father and Son that it would be just as possible to dethrone God as it would to pluck one from salvation. "I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." (St. John 17:23.) This was the prayer of Jesus for those who were chosen in Him. We are in the Golden Chain now by being in the link of Jesus. We were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. The answer to this prayer shall have been made manifest to His saints when God shall have perfected the revelation of "Christ in you the hope of glory." (Col. 1:27) Much dross must be burned in the fiery furnace of affliction before Jesus takes up his abode in us and we experimentally become a link in this golden chain. Our trust of being in the chain is to be in the link of Jesus. Our hope of being a link in the chain is through the merits of Jesus. When we shall have been purified as gold is purified we shall shine as gold and be a link in that chain. We are interlinked with God and the son by being in their hands. Jesus said, "Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand, My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (St. John 10:28-29). I want to ask the question Paul asked in the 8th chapter of Romans, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" May we examine the Golden Chain of Salvation as recorded in Romans 8:29-30. "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestsinate to be

conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." This could be properly called the five interlinking golden links in the chain of salvation. Foreknowledge, predestination, effectual calling, complete justification, and ultimate glorification are the five golden links of the strong chain which reaches from before time in eternity embracing all events relative to salvation in time, which continues on into eternity with the final glorification of His saints. Each link is so intertwined that there can be no idea entertained of contingency. This is a perfect chain of salvation with no missing links to be added. It is strong because God is in each link. No link is dependent upon the volition or acts of puny man. It is God who predestinated, foreknew, called, justified, and glorified. Is there anything else necessary? God foreknew them by choosing them in His Son. God predestinated their salvation by decreeing all things necessary thereto. God calls by the direct operation of His Holy Spirit. God justifies through His son. God glorifies by the work of His Spirit. This Three-one God perfects salvation for each and every subject of His Love. We stated that God decreed all things necessary unto the salvation of His people. Can you tell me one thing that has been, is now, or is to be, that is not necessary? This question brings me to consider this chain of salvation interchaining with the "well-ordered, unbroken chain" of all things. Permit us, Lord, to glance at the golden chain embracing all things. Rom. 8:28 reads, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." All things are linked together, so we must consider them as in the chain. Some people suggest that if we add anything to the five things mentioned in the next two verses we are liable to the plagues mentioned in Revelations 22:18. May I

suggest to those who would try to take away the remaining things catalogued in the remainder of the 8th chapter of Romans that they read Revelation 22:19. Paul is showing here in the 8th chapter of Romans the interchaining of all things with the Golden Chain of Salvation that we treated upon in the paragraph above. We have briefly considered the things mentioned in the 29th and 30th verses. Let us catalogue the remainder. They are tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, depth, and any other creature. These are all specifically mentioned. Can you think of anything else? These are all included in the chain of all things. They all work together for good. Let us prove it by taking up one of the things mentioned in the 35th verse that man would surmise as being terrible and able to separate us from the love of Christ. Tribulations (which are severe afflictions) becomes a golden link in the golden chain of experience according to Paul in Romans 5:3- 5. "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulations worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed." One is necessary unto another. One is the effect of another. One works another. This is a five linked golden chain of experience in which the link of tribulations is glorious or golden because it is necessary in order to affect the other links. Space will not permit giving the many passages of the Bible that prove each and every child of God shall have tribulations. Have you ever been brought to thank God for these severe afflictions and fiery trials, knowing they were necessary in order to turn your trust from self unto His righteousness? When they have been revealed to you as blessings in disguise, you are made to glory in them and consider them golden. Just as certain as tribulations are experienced by a child of God, patience will be realized. They cause you to submit your case into His hand, and make you

realize He is able to save. They cause you to "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." This affects an experience of grace. Through much tribulation you are made to be patient. In this state of patience Jesus comes to you as your Saviour. He takes up His abode in you. This surely is a gracious experience. When this is your experience you are made not ashamed. You are not ashamed to own Him as your Lord. You readily and anxiously confess Him as your Hope and salvation. This Hope has been wrought in you by this experience. Is not this a golden hope? A hope that is based upon the finished and complete work of Christ is wonderful. A hope that is not dependent upon the puny works of a sinful man is an "Anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil" (Heb. 6:19). You just as surely confess this hope as you are possessed with it. This chain cannot be broken. You must be brought through all five stages. Do not tell me that the link of confession is based upon the option of the creature. It is a certain work of the Holy Spirit. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10). "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord" (Prov. 16:1). Then, surely the Lord is in each of the five links in the golden chain of experience and must each be wrought by the God of Heaven! Is any part of the blessings relative to salvation dependent upon the option of the creature? Your answer is, "No." It is grace from eternity; it is grace in time; and, it is grace unto eternity. You sing praises unto Him for every particle of your experience realized here, and for the hope you have of being ultimately delivered from sin. We would like to think of the chain of fire for a few moments. Seven interlinking experiences that are grievous while being experienced, prove glorious and golden for the purpose God has in them. Seven stages of the fiery furnace is mentioned in Romans 8:35. Tribulations, distress, persecution, famine,

nakedness, peril, and sword are all links in the chain of fire which are decreed to burn the dross from His people. “Purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). Jesus is to purify unto himself this peculiar people. He gave himself for this purpose and the application will surely be made. All dross shall be burned from them. These severe afflictions work a distress. God’s people are persecuted while distressed. This brings about a famine. Have you ever been in this famished condition when you could find nothing to quench your hunger and your thirst? Figuratively speaking, all children of God come to this stage. The reason why they become so hungry and thirsty for righteousness is because in this condition of distress they can find no righteousness of their own to satisfy. This famished condition is necessary in order to cause you to look to Him for food and drink. He is the bread and water that quenches their thirst. You must not only be brought into this famished condition but you must also be stripped of your clothing. A man clothed with his own righteousness is clothed with filthy rags. These distresses burn these filthy rags from you and you find yourself hungry, thirsty, distressed, and naked. This indeed brings about a peril. You are in close contact with the sword. The sword kills. Paul said, “We are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” He said again, “The commandment came, sin revived, and I died” (Romans 7:9). We must be brought by the way of the sword. No wonder it is contrary to the will of the natural creature to come unto Jesus, because the flaming sword is turning every way. It is placed at the entrance gate which makes it a strait gate. Jesus said, “No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (St. John 6:44). They must be drawn through the sword. In the song of Moses recorded in Deuteronomy 32:39, we read, “I kill, and I make alive: I wound, and I heal.” The sword is necessary in order to be made alive in the Spirit. Sword of man cannot frustrate nor

separate us from His love. Granting that man can kill the body, he cannot kill the soul. The soul of man is solely in the hands of God and cannot be touched by any other; but He is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. God operates upon the soul in the transition of His children from walking after the flesh to walking after the Spirit. The work of God upon the soul of a child of God causes it to faint (See Psalms 107:5). Then He restores the soul as we find in the twenty-third Psalm. My son prefaced a statement not long ago with, "When God saved my soul." It is indeed a glorious experience of the soul to be delivered from death unto life immortal! There must be a death experienced in the strait gate. This strait gate and narrow way leadeth unto life (Matt. 7:13-14). The chain of fire is certainly necessary in applying the life of Christ to His people. This chain is necessary in order to bring about repentance from dead works, which is the first link in the chain of the first principles of the oracles of God. The golden chain of the principles of the doctrine of Christ is composed of the following links: Repentance from dead works, faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment (See Heb. 6:1). These six principles are so interlinked that one is intwined with another so that one begets the other. The golden chain of baptism consists of, baptism of the Holy Ghost, baptism of fire, baptism of repentance, baptism in Jesus, baptism in His death, baptism of the soul, and baptism of the body. We were all baptized by one Spirit into the body of Jesus when we were chosen in Him. We are baptized by fire in the furnace of affliction. We were baptized into His death by being in Him and going into the grave with Him, being crucified with Him. The Spirit envelopes or baptizes the soul while being born of the Spirit. The Spirit will baptize the body in the resurrection from the dead. We are baptized with repentance when God grants or gives us repentance. You see this golden chain of baptism begins before time in eternity

when God's people were immersed, enveloped, submerged, elected, chosen, or baptized in Christ; experienced by His people from the beginning of the work of the Holy Spirit upon them in time unto the end of their sojourn here; and, finally completed when their mortal bodies are baptized with immortality in the resurrection. This is the chain of one baptism because it is performed by God with one spirit into one body. Each link (or phase) is golden because it is the work of God. Baptism in water is figurative of this one baptism which is essential unto salvation including all the links or phases. This chain of baptism of the Spirit interchains with the golden chain of the fruits of the Spirit. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23). This nine-linked golden chain of fruit is manifested in the walk and conversation of all who have been wrought upon by the Spirit. Each is golden because it is the work of God's Spirit. God's love given unto us produces this chain: love of God, love to God, love to the brethren. This great godly love produces joy unspeakable and full of glory. This produces peace that passeth understanding. It is a peaceful calm following a surging storm. The peace treaty that God stamps with the seal of the Holy Spirit makes manifest this chain, peace from God, peace to God, peace to the brethren. The undeserved peace from God begets longsuffering. We forbear because God has been so forbearing with us. We endure injuries for a long time because we found that God has been more merciful to us than we could be to others. This is interlinked with gentleness. If we love our brethren, if we manifest the joy that is in our soul, if we strive for peace, if we are in possession of a forgiving, forbearing, longsuffering spirit, surely, we are gentle, kind, not harsh in our dealings, turning away wrath with a soft answer. This is good. The character so inspired manifests a good walk and conversation, because

God has been pleased to work the chain of to will and to do of His good pleasure in this character. All this results in the chain of faith; faith in God, faith in Christ, faith in the brethren as being objects of God's love. This abiding faith in God's mercy and grace begets meekness. One so possessed is made to be humble, submissive, and not proud nor haughty in his dealings and conversations. Our walk and conversation has been tempered with the work of the Holy Spirit. Our disposition has been decidedly affected. One is not radical nor fanatical but moderation is evidenced in his demeanor. His temperament has been changed from serving the law of sin to crying for and desiring the law of the Spirit in Christ which is the law of love. Time and space forbids us writing our thoughts on the chains of the law, love, steps of a good man, growth in grace, deliverance, and other golden chain of divine truth that have so flooded my mind for the past few weeks. I trust God will bless the reader with golden chains of spiritual thought to meditate sweetly upon His wonderful care for you. Signs of the Times, Vol. 122, No. 7, July, 1954.

PREACHING THE CROSS

October, 1954 PAUL says in his first letter to the "Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ"; "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). The preaching of the cross is far more extensive than proclaiming that Christ was crucified on the cross on Golgotha Hill almost two thousand years ago. May God reveal unto us and inspire us to grasp a little of the "greatness" of the subject of the cross.

The construction of two pieces of timber so that one crosses another results in a cross. Two lines drawn so that one crosses another is said to be a cross. Figures of the cross both in nature and craftsmanship are too numerous for you to count, even from where you are now sitting. One principle contradicting another principle creates a cross. Trials and tribulations are crosses because they are the result of conflicting principles. When life comes into contact with death there is suffering which manifests a cross. Proclaiming the contrasting characteristics of Christ would be preaching the cross of Christ. The subject of the cross of Christ would necessarily embrace all His life from the time He was born as Son of man until the time He was resurrected from the tomb. Paul was inspired to write in Ephesians 2:15- 16, "For to make in himself twain one new man, so making peace: and that he might reconcile both unto God by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." It was befitting that the final climax of Christ's sufferings be on a cross. He took up His cross when He was made lower than the angels. When the Son of God took upon Himself the character of the Son of Man the cross was made manifest. The new man was the cross-breeding of God and man. We must proclaim the dual characteristics of Christ to preach the cross. When we preach Him as God-man, Divine-human, King-priest, Master-servant, abasedexalted, and crucified-resurrected, we preach the cross. When we declare Him to be possessed of both strength and weakness; flesh and Spirit; us and Him, and, the Creator and creature we are preaching the cross. He being both divine and human, He was possessed with the cross of wills. The human will prayed, "If it be possible let this cup pass"; yet the divine will said, "Not my will but Thine be done." Jehovah was the Father of Jesus and Mary was His mother. As the Son of God, He lives eternally; as the Son of man He had a timely existence which began to be made manifest when He was born of the virgin, Mary, and ended when He

died on the cross. Did the body of Jesus come to an end when it was placed in the tomb? No! No! No! There was a dissolution of His body and Spirit on the day of crucifixion. His Spirit was commended unto His Father; the body was laid in the tomb. This same Spirit raised Jesus from the dead on the third day. He became the "firstfruits." His body was the first human body to be clothed with immorality. The Man, Christ Jesus, was raised from the dead! This was accomplished in His resurrection. He being a cross of Himself and us, we being in Him, He being raised from the dead, gives us the basis of our hope of the resurrection of our bodies by the same Spirit. (See Romans 8:11). Jesus Christ was King-priest. He was ruler over His own body. He was the first and only one born of woman who was able to keep His body under subjection to such extent that He did not sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. His composition being such, His body was an acceptable sacrifice and gift to the Father for His people. We find in Hebrews 5:1 that the duties of a high priest were to "offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." This High Priest forever perfected His people in the sight of God by offering His own blood as a sacrifice and His body, the life He lived here, as the acceptable gift unto His Father. He is our Kingpriest. He is the sole head and governor of the church, those who are called out by Him. His divine generation, His royal descent, His perfect nature, His wonderful offering, all this well qualifies as the perfect King and Priest to illuminate His people of grace and peace. He blesses them with that consoling people to walk in paths of righteousness. He leads them and holds them steady with His hand. When they falter and fall by the wayside, His eye is ever on them and His encourages them with the wonders of His power and grace. He purifies their souls with the washing of regeneration for them to the Father within the Holiest of Holies. Priests before Him to offer sacrifices daily, He offered Himself once. They offered for their own sins as well as the

sins of the people; He being without sin, could offer Himself for the sins of His people only. He entered once into the Holy Place and obtained eternal redemption for us by His own blood which could take away sin; they could only enter into the shadow of the Holy Place in the worldly sanctuary by blood of goats and calves which could not take away sin. The maneuvers of the high priests of the Levitical Priesthood were only shadows and types; His was the real and true. We must preach Him as being both Master and servant if we preach the cross. As master His demands were that the law be kept to a jot and tittle; as servant, He perfectly fulfilled the law. As master, He demanded that the sinner be punished, as servant, He took upon Himself this punishment in behalf of His people. As master, He instructs His people; as servant, He comes into their hearts and enables them to carry out His instructions. He orders them to perform and performs for them that which He orders. He is great and small. He is so great that all His people are in Him. He is small enough to dwell in the heart of one of His little ones. He is strong enough to have power over all flesh, yet weak enough that He said while upon earth, "The Son of Himself can do nothing." "The Father worketh hitherto, and I work." He was rich and poor. He was so rich that He owns all things; so poor that He said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head" (Matt. 8:20). He experienced all the crosses of opposing characteristics and experiences. We must preach this in order to preach the cross. Dear ones, is it not a comfort to you to realize that your Savior knows how to sympathize with your cross? You have never felt grief more than He. Your temptations have never been greater than His temptations. You have never experienced being forsaken to a greater extent than He experienced. Is He not a wonderful sympathizing Savior? We must preach this in order to preach the cross. Preaching the cross includes not only the Cross of

Jesus Christ but also the cross of His people. We read in Matt. 16:24, "Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. The cross of two opposing characteristics consisting of the flesh and the Spirit must have been the cross under consideration. Each child of God "takes up his cross" when he is born of the Spirit. He is not familiar with the cross before this time because all he knows is his carnal natural desires, thus he is in fellowship with this miraculous work of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit takes up its abode in the soul of an individual he begins to experience the cross the world knows nothing about. A child of God soon learns, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit" (John 3:6). We learn by sad experience that we cannot spiritualize the flesh nor "fleshilize" the Spirit. (Pardon the newly coined word, but this is the only way I know to make it plain.) There is no blending the two together in this world, thus, the cross. The flesh shall be spiritualized in the resurrection. The soul is spiritualized in being born of the Spirit in this life. We cannot reform nor renovate the flesh so that it can agree with the spiritual, neither can we bring the Spirit down so that it can agree with the flesh. Paul said in Galatians 5:17, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: [the cross] so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Those born of the Spirit are possessed with dual contrary characteristics and experiences. No wonder we are strangers to ourselves! The Spirit is spiritual and the flesh is natural. The flesh is carnal and the Spirit is holy. The Spirit is immortal and the flesh is mortal. The Spirit is righteous and the flesh sinful. The Spirit is living and the flesh is dying. The regenerated mind serves the law of God but the flesh serves the law of sin. We experience the cross of life and death, joys and sorrows, good and evil, abased and exalted, humility and pride,

forsaken and owned, and many, many other conflicts too numerous to mention. Hart was inspired to write many hymns in harmony with the strange conflicting crosses of a child of God. He wrote: “How strange is the course that a Christian must steer, How perplexed is the path he must tread! The hope of his happiness rises from fear, And his life he receives from the dead. His fairest pretensions must wholly be waived, And his best resolutions be crossed; Nor can he expect to be perfectly saved, ‘Til he finds himself utterly lost. When all this is done, and his heart is assured Of the total remission of sins, When his pardon is signed and his peace is procured, From that moment his conflict begins.” (Beebe’s Collection, 1037) How strange that one must lose his own life to find it! He must feel himself to be lost before he can be saved. He must die in order to live. He must fear before he hopes. The righteous views himself as sinful and the greatest is made to feel “less than the least.” The way up is down. The text says, “The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.” It has a reverse effect upon those who perish. Those who are not born of God cannot receive the things of the Spirit. Preaching the cross “cuts them to the heart” while it “pricks us in the heart.” It antagonizes them and comforts us. It drives them away while it draws us. It edifies us and confuses them. It is to us, “the power of God”; to them, “foolishness.” It is foolishness to them because they feel capable of performing righteousness, atoning for their little mistakes, reforming and renovating themselves, dedicating their lives to God, and making heaven their home; so, why the cross? Why was it necessary for Christ to perform righteousness and it be imputed to them? Why was it necessary for Christ to die on the cross considering they are able to take of themselves? Why is it necessary for the Spirit of God to directly work in their hearts when they feel capable of performing the work required with the spirit they naturally possess? Why is the Spirit of God a

cross to the spirit of the carnal or natural mind when the natural mind itself seems to them to be sufficient to choose God and work righteousness? Why are they not in strict agreement? The aforestated questions above I know to be in harmony with the thoughts of the unregenerated mind. Preaching the cross was to me foolishness for years after I was ordained by man to preach! I religiously preached the power of man and the wisdom of man and to make heaven his home! I have no stones to throw at them because I was as conscientious and honest in my convictions as anyone could be. I had not experienced the cross; therefore, I could not preach it. I know that something occurred to me one night as I closed a discourse on the subject, "Sinners in the hands of an angry God." This mighty something that took hold of me crossed everything I had ever known and brought to nought all I had thought myself to be. I trust this was the Holy Spirit that manifested my righteousness as filthy rags in His sight. I trust that I was given the Holy Ghost conscience which was a cross to my natural conscience. My life since that time has been full of conflicts and crosses. I have been convinced that it is through hell we enter heaven, and by the cross we obtain the crown. "But unto us, which are saved, it is the power of God." God's power caused us to look to the cross of Christ for remission of sins. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission for sin. It is through the power of God that our sins are remitted because it required the blood of His own Son shed on the cross to justify the remission of our sins. It is through the power of God that we are given His Spirit which is so contradictory to our natural carnal spirit that it is neither desired nor can be obtained by our power. The things we naturally consider wisdom, the cross manifests as foolishness. What a cross between the natural and the spiritual mind! What a rugged cross experienced by those upon whom the power of God hath wrought a work! Sometime ago at a funeral the choir sang, "The Old Rugged

Cross." As they sang the words, "I'll exchange it some day for a crown," my mind was deeply impressed upon that grand exchange. A crown of immortality awaits the enlivened sinner. A crown of glory is laid up for those who feel so low and insignificant. A crown of eternal life will swallow up those who die in the Lord. The incorruptible crown shall clothe the corruptible body. We experience the cross here, but beyond this sphere of time we shall realize the crown. It was said of Jesus in Hebrews 12:2 "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." We are to follow Him. Because of His accomplishments, that joy is set before us. We press towards the mark of the prize of the high calling when we shall be called upon high to sit with Him. Should we not be emboldened to endure the cross and be encouraged to run the race that is set before us seeing that such a crown is our reward and prize at the end of the race. May God give you strength and courage to endure the cross with patience and persevere in the race with faith. May He fight as a good soldier the foes that dwell within. May you be supplied with all your need so that at the end of the way you may say with Paul, "For I am now ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: not to me only, but unto them also that love His appearing" (2 Tim. 6:6-8). May God bless these thoughts to your comfort and edification.

"I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHICH STRENGTHENETH ME"

Philippians 4:13 January, 1955 Did you ever try with all your strength for days to do a certain thing and utterly fail? You tried so persistently that you became mentally and physically exhausted to such extent that your hope fainted? If so, you know what I have gone through in an attempt to write an editorial. I concluded this morning that it had been proved I am a miserable failure and all my exercises of preaching, praying, singing, writing and conversation with saints were vain imaginations and hypocritical actions which had come to an end! The fact that I had failed in this attempt climaxed the proof. Deep, grievous, heart-searching meditations proved that I did not have one qualification that I had been called into this work! No one has ever been so weak as I! Then, as lightning suddenly flashes into darkness, came these startling words, "When I am weak, then am I strong, I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." The words of Christ followed, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." This soothed my aching heart and calmed my troubled breast. It need be that I be shown many times "That the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matt. 11:5). It does no suffice just to tell the children of God these things. They must be shown again and again. They must experience it time after time. I cannot see when left to my own natural resources. When Christ opens my blind eyes and give me spiritual sight then I can see. The fact that I can see now does not suffice for tomorrow. Today, I may see that all things work together for good including my troubles and trials. Tomorrow, I may be persuaded that all things are against me. Yesterday, I was persuaded that my entire life had been wasted, all my efforts useless, and that it would have been better had I never been born into this natural world. Today there is new light to lighten my pathway so that I have hopes for the morrow. I trust Christ has opened my

eyes to see that God has provided for me all through my life, sustained me with His grace, and will not let me fall finally away; but will uphold me with His hand through the severest of trials and finally raise me triumph and over it all through Christ which strengtheneth me. I cannot walk upon volition of my own will, by my own ability but must realize that I am lame. I must be shown that the lame walk through Christ which strengtheneth. "I can walk through Christ which strengtheneth me." "A man's heart deviseth his way but the Lord directeth his steps," is not learned by reading the sixteenth chapter of Proverbs, but by actual experience. When the strength of Christ is imputed to the individual he is not lame but strong in the Lord, walking, taking the steps that God directs certainly and steadily. His strength is not somewhere afar off, just being accredited to our account, but it is imputed to us, strengthening us to walk in paths of righteousness. He has placed our feet upon the rock and established our goings. We are far from sitting on the stool of "do-nothing" when we are blessed to be in this state. We are walking in His steps. We suffer, become humble, believe, confess, pray, repent, love, and hope through Christ which strengtheneth us. I can do the seemingly impossible through this strength which is imputed to me. A few months ago, I was deeply impressed to accompany Elder Rhodes on a tour west to visit Elder T. R. Jefferson and wife and the brethren in Washington, Oregon and California. I was unable financially, physically, and in every other way to make the venture. It seemed as though I was pressed against a wall that could not be pierced. I was so depressed and everything looked so gloomy that I said to my wife before leaving, "Dessie Mae, let us ask Elder Rhodes to pray for us." We knelt in our home and Elder Rhodes was wonderfully inspired to pray God to divinely strengthen, direct and protect us on this trip. While he was praying the wall disappeared, my troubled breast was calmed, and I was strengthened to such

extent that I enjoyed that trip as much as any other venture I had ever made. I have gone into the sacred stand many times trembling because I was so weak, being void of spiritual thoughts, that I could not see how I could speak intelligently on anything. My mind would be so confused that I would think it impossible to have connected thoughts on any subject. I verily believe the mind of Christ has been imputed to me on such occasions that the meditations of the mind and the flow of words came calmly and fluently with all ease. “I can preach through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Some time ago a church called me to serve it in the capacity of pastor. The first thought came into my mind and I expressed it thus: “I cannot serve you.” A thought followed and I expressed it also, “I can serve you as pastor through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Is it not a wonderful, mysterious thought that it is the blind who are blessed to see; the lame are blessed to walk; the unclean are cleansed; the dead are raised; the deaf hear, and the poor have the gospel preached to them? Jesus performed all these natural miracles here while in this world as types of miracles more sublime. The imputation of His spiritual strength by His Word is much more sublime! “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”; says Jesus as recorded in St. John 6:63. When Jesus speaks directly to you it enlivens you because He imparts to you His Spirit and life. It works in you both to will and to do. It is Christ in you who walks. A sister, whom I was blessed to baptize in the state of Washington, wrote me an inquiry on the subject of predestination relative to the objection that it tends to suppress action. The fact that some who professed to believe in the doctrine of predestination were at ease, being content to sit on the “donothing” stool, justifying their inactivity upon this point of doctrine, disturbed her because of her impelling desire to study the Scriptures and tread the steps of the faithful. I quote a part of my reply: “Did you know that the

idea of predestination has spurred people to action in the face of many difficulties?" Instead of causing them to be content to sit on the stool of 'do-nothing' it has rather encouraged them to persevere to action to make their desires a reality. You feel impressed to do something, you feel this impression is from God, you undertake it with the thought that you can because God has predetermined that you should do it regardless of so many obstacles that seem to be in the way. You are impressed that God is for you and nothing can be against you. If God be for you, you will realize your ambitions. Your desires and your actions are as much predestinated as your home in heaven as one of God's elect family. In Romans eighth chapter, the thought expressed is that God has predestinated us to conform to the image of Jesus. He does this partly in this life by conforming our desires and characteristics of the inner man to that of Jesus. He will perfect it in the resurrection when the outer man will be adopted into the family by the immortalization of the mortal body." May I add, this conforming to the image of Jesus is the imputation of His strength to us. When our natural thoughts are brought to a state of confusion and vanity, it is an appropriate moment for Christ to strengthen us by imputing His thoughts to us. When this is done, our thoughts are conformed to the image of Christ; our minds are upon godly things. Our desires are for a closer walk with Him. I can think through Christ which strengtheneth me. These thoughts are sublime. These thoughts conform the will to the will of Christ because this will is worked in us. I can will through Christ which strengtheneth me. God's people must learn by sad experience that the will alone is not sufficient. If you read the account of Peter's denial of Christ, you will find that he had to be converted to this fact. You must be converted in the same manner of Peter's conversion. Did you ever have a godly desire and find that all your efforts were unsuccessful and vain? Were you ever fully persuaded

in mind to do something that would be becoming to a child of God and then have your thoughts entirely changed so that instead of doing that which you were impressed to do, you did the opposite? My experience is such so much of the time, that I have been made to know many times the necessity of the do being worked also. Many times I can say with Paul, "To will is present with me but how to perform that which is good I find not." Do you know why Paul said this? He had searched and tried all of his resources and all of them had failed. All our resources must be tried out and proved as vain before Christ imputes His strength unto us. When He imputes His strength is when I can truly say from the heart, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." It is Christ who strengthens the weak hands, confirms the feeble knees, and says to them of a fearful heart, "Be strong, fear not." He says to the fearful, "Fear not." He makes the lame to leap as an hart and the tongue of the dumb to sing. (See Isaiah 35). If Christ be speaking through me, then I can say to you as the writer to the Hebrews said, "Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees. Make straight paths for your feet." You can lift up the hands that hang down, confirm the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, when Christ imputes His strength to you. I have often been so low and discouraged that I could not go on. A brother would notice me when in this condition. He would say comforting words of kindness and encouragement to me and I would be immediately strengthened. My hands would be lifted up and my feeble knees confirmed by these words of my brother. Could it have been Christ in my brother speaking to me? The words of Christ are spirit and life. The words of Christ are strengthening. I have been persuaded that Christ speaks often to me through my brethren because of the strength that has been imputed to me while under the influence of these words. Have you ever visited the sick and seen their

countenance brighten when you enter the room? Have you ever visited people and hear them say so enthusiastically, "I am so glad you came, your visit has meant so much to me"? You have administered to those who were in need and have witnessed their being strengthened by this ministration. They have seemed to want to give you the praise for it and you have conscientiously told them that no praise was due you and advised them to thank God for any benefit they had received. Your kindness indeed strengthened them and the appreciation manifested by them strengthened you. "I can strengthen others through Christ which strengtheneth me." David prayed, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, uphold me with thy free spirit; then, will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee" (Psalms 51:12-13). One great epoch in my experience came to me while being enhanced by the preaching of an elder who was blessed to teach me how mercy could be given and justice satisfied. One of the qualifications of an elder is "apt to teach." If there be no evidence that God's little children have been taught through a man's preaching, I am persuaded, that the man ought not to be ordained as an elder because he is lacking in qualifications. Paul was blessed to "teach in every church" (1 Cor. 4:17). Paul taught Timothy, his son in the ministry. He commanded Timothy to "Command and teach." "I can teach through Christ which strengtheneth me." I have been encouraged by many who have come to me and convinced me that many questions had been cleared up through my preaching. Does this have a tendency to exalt me in my estimation of myself? No! No! No! It humbles me instead. The thought that God has graced me, who am less than the least of all saints," with such ministration, causes me to realize more fully my littleness and dependence upon Him. I have heard brethren discourage others from expressing to a minister their appreciation and enjoyment of his sermon on the basis that "It might puff him

up.” If such would “puff” one up, it would be better for the church to “puff’ him up until he burst. I say, give vent to your feelings. If you have profited in a sermon and enjoyed it, express your sentiments to the speaker. Many of God’s ministers, who grope along, battling with many doubts concerning their call into this position, have been strengthened by words of encouragement from the hearers. You, no doubt, have felt impressed to go to your pastor and let him know how much you appreciate his efforts in visiting, preaching, advising, praying, laboring for unity and peace among brethren, and his readiness in administering in all other duties of a pastor. You may have failed to do this, excusing yourself with the thought, “What I may say to him would be of no benefit.” Your pastor is your servant. A servant is always benefited and strengthened by kindness of his master. A true pastor considers himself less than the least; thus, esteeming the least as greater than he. He sees Jesus in you but cannot see Him in himself. I can strengthen my pastor through Christ which strengtheneth me. It pleased God to give us each other. The words that we speak and the things we do have their effect upon each other. Words and deeds are not without effect. They either discourage or encourage, please or displease, lift up or cast down, yea, weaken or strengthen. Jesus said, “Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, It were better for him that a millstone be hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matt. 18:6). May we be given to pray God that we be strengthened in conversation and deed that we may say appropriate words and do the things that are becoming to God’s little children lest we offend one another. May we be strengthened to give thanks unto God for each other. Paul was bound to give thanks unto God for his brethren. My brethren means so much to me. I have been made to thank God for their “labor of love” seeing their labor is stimulated by love instead of hope for reward.

The doctrine John talked about was the doctrine of love. The commandment received by the direct operation of the Spirit of God is love Him and love one another. This commandment comes to us by the imputing of Christ's love into our hearts. When we are strengthened by the love of Christ we can love Him and our brethren. I can thank God for my brethren and love them through Christ which strengtheneth me. Space will not permit us to write upon the many other things that have come into our mind relative to this great text. I trust God will strengthen the reader to enlarge upon these gleanings with many precious thoughts of Christ and His Imputed strength unto us. Bear in mind that it is the weak who are strengthened by Christ. If we felt we had the ability to perform anything of ourselves we would not feel the need of the strength of Christ for this thing. If we felt we could do one thing without Christ then we would be strong enough that the language of Paul as expressed in the title of this article could not apply to us for we would have to say, "One thing I can do of myself but can do all other things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Realizing my weakness to so great extent that I cannot do just one thing godly of myself, then I must depend upon Christ's strength to perform all things. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Republished: Signs of the Times, Vol. 164, No. 2, February 1996.

GOD'S METHOD OF ADDING BELIEVERS INTO THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCH

April, 1955 AN EDITOR forwarded a request to me from a reader in Alabama, to write a treatise on Romans 10:14 which reads, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of

whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" I attempt this fully aware of the fact that I must be especially inspired with divine qualifications for this special venture or this attempt will be vain. We cannot lift a verse of Scripture out of its context and treat upon it independently of its setting and hope to derive a true conclusion. Neither can we come to a true conclusion without considering all the Scriptures lest there be a contradiction. The fact that this verse is written using all pronouns in third person we must consider who is writing, to whom it is addressed, of whom is he speaking and what is the subject under consideration? Paul, who was a "servant of Jesus Christ," "Called to be an apostle," "Separated unto the gospel of Jesus Christ," did this writing. He had "received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations." Let us see how Paul was led into this condition. Read the ninth chapter of Acts relative to his conversion. Paul was one of the elect family, "A chosen vessel," beloved of God, and was chosen in Christ before he had this experience. He was full of zeal toward God, but not according to knowledge when the light shined about him. He had breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of Christ and had obtained authority from the high priests to bring men and women bound to Jerusalem who were disciples of the Lord. He was persecuting worshippers of the Christ when he was stopped by Him. We see, then, that Paul was ordained beforehand by God unto the position he was in when he wrote this letter but it took the direct operation of God's Holy Spirit upon both Paul and Ananias, a preacher, to perfect this ordination. He assented to believe in God but not that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. He possessed zeal toward God but not a zeal toward Jesus Christ. He was a chosen vessel but had not been separated unto the gospel of Jesus Christ. When you read this account of Paul's experience as recorded in the ninth and twenty-second chapters of Acts you will find that

Paul heard the voice of the Son of God. This voice had its effect as always. This voice ordered him to go to a certain place "and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do" (Acts 22:10). At the same time God was working directly upon a preacher, Ananias. The Lord said unto Ananias, "Go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for, behold, he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight... Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:11-12, 15-16)). Read the record. You will see that both obeyed and met. The result was that Paul heard the preacher because God had prepared the heart of Paul and had sent the preacher. Paul believed the preacher because God had and was directly working upon Paul and the preacher. Ananias laid his hand upon Paul, Paul received his sight, Ananias baptized Paul, ordained him as a preacher as ministers are ordained today. Paul abode there certain days and straightway preached Jesus in the synagogues as the Christ, the Son of God. He had now received grace and apostleship. We see that Paul knew by his experience what he was writing in Romans 10:14-15. He knew that God had sent and used a preacher in bringing him into the fellowship of the Church, and in ordaining him as a minister. God hath ordained that a few of the many for whom Jesus died will be added to the Church in this way. Paul is particularly addressing those who have already been added to the Church in Romans 10:14. He is primarily addressing the Gentiles who have been endowed with the Holy Spirit, who have heard and believed gospel preaching. These have the faith in their hearts that Jesus is the Son of God. These have confessed with their mouths and have been baptized. They knew from experience that there

had been a miraculous working. They had heard and believed God-sent preachers. God uses Paul in this letter to preach to them as well as unto us to their edification and comfort. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21). God is saving them as well as us from erroneous theories and vain practices through Paul's preaching. We want you to understand that Paul is writing to believers in Christ Jesus. He is writing of a people of God who have not yet believed that Jesus is the Christ. Paul has under consideration the children of God among the Jews who have a zeal toward God but not according to knowledge. His heart's desire and prayer to God is that they might be saved. He bears record of this zeal in trying to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves unto the righteousness of God. The zealous law worshippers of this day are in the same category, especially those who are not satisfied with their righteousness but go about trying to establish their own righteousness. I think it is evident that many who are born of God do not yet believe that Jesus is their Christ. They are yet under the law and worshippers of it. One truly born of God finds by sad experience that his efforts to establish his own righteousness are not successful, seeing he falls short of meeting its demands. Paul says in Romans 10:4, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." There is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile for the "same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him." Then he quotes, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). In response to the quotation, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," Paul asks a number of questions which verifies God's method of saving His people in the sense expressed in the quotation. May we think of this as a golden chain God uses in especially saving a remnant of His elect from the dominion of the law and sin experienced in time. It is His way of bringing some of His

children into sweet fellowship with one another. Through this chain He makes them fit and proper subjects for baptism. Those of you who are "called to be saints," who are members of the Church, know that you heard the truth preached by, or rather, through a preacher. Because that your heart was prepared to hear the preached truth, you heard and believed the truth. You assented to this truth by confessing with your mouth using words of the tongue which was prepared by the Lord. You were received by the Church and were baptized by a preacher. All members of the militant church have heard and believed the preaching of God-sent ministers, and have been baptized in water by a God-sent and properly ordained preacher. These expressions are in strict accord with all cases cited in the Acts. We want to call your attention to Paul's discourse on Mars Hill in Athens. The people Paul addressed there had an altar having this inscription, "To the unknown God." "As I passed by, and beheld your devotion, I found an altar with this inscription, to the unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you" (Acts 17:23). These were ignorantly worshipping God. Therefore, they were proper subjects of gospel address. Paul preached that God was the Lord of the heavens and of the earth, and that in Him we moved and had our being. He also preached Christ unto them and some believed! These people were subjects of gospel address because they ignorantly worshipped God. They had been born again but had not yet believed in Jesus Christ. God was directly working with Paul and some of these people in order to bring them into the knowledge of the truth. The result was that "Certain men cleaved unto him and believed" (Acts 17:34). You will notice that it was certain men. It was certain men who had godly preparations. Let us pass to Philip and the eunuch of Ethiopia as recorded in Acts 8:26-39, and see if we do have the same procedure as indicated in Romans 10:14-15. Here we find that a preacher was sent. Philip was sent to the Ethiopian.

The Ethiopian was a worshipper of God because he had gone up to the temple at Jerusalem to worship. The eunuch was interested in the Scriptures because he was reading the prophecy of Isaiah as he rode along in his chariot. He read but did not understand what he read. He wanted to know of Philip if Isaiah was speaking of himself or of some other man. The eunuch was reading the seventh and eighth verses of the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. Philip began at the same Scripture and preached unto him Jesus. When they had come to certain water, the eunuch asked, "See here is water. What doth hinder me to be baptized?" Philip answered, "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest." The eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Philip baptized the eunuch. The eunuch was born of the Spirit and his heart especially prepared by God to hear and believe the preaching of Philip. Philip was especially sent to preach Jesus to the eunuch. When the eunuch assented to the belief that Jesus is the Son of God, the eunuch was a fit subject for baptism. The eunuch was born of God and in possession of godly zeal, he was ignorantly worshipping the symbol at Jerusalem and was interested in the Scriptures before Philip preached to him. The eunuch was, being in that condition, a subject of gospel address. He was alive spiritually but needed guidance because he couldn't understand what he read. The Ethiopian did not know whether Isaiah spoke of himself or of some other man. God used Philip to preach Jesus unto him that he might understand that Isaiah was prophesying of Jesus and not of himself. What was the result? The eunuch believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and was given a desire to follow Him in baptism in water. The eunuch was added to the church in fellowship one with another. Now, read the second chapter of Acts. You will find that Peter was especially sent and qualified to preach that sermon by the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. You will see that it especially pricked the hearts of those individuals whom God

had prepared their hearts to receive it. They yet did not understand what to do. They realized they must do something but did not know what they must do, so they inquired, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” These were proper subjects to receive God’s commands, exhortations, and testimonies through the mouth of Peter that they might be saved from “this untoward generation” and be added to the Church. They who gave evidence that they had gladly received His word were baptized. The command to repent and be baptized was the command to outwardly make manifest the repentance that they already experienced in heart by the direct operation of God’s Holy Spirit. This was a command to come out from among them and be separate. Read Acts 10 for an account of Cornelius’ conversion. Cornelius was already born of God before God gave him the special vision recorded because he was “a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people and prayed to God alway.” God dealt directly with him by commanding him specifically to go to a certain place and call for a certain man who would tell him what he ought to do. God, also, directly qualified Peter for this special occasion. Note that in all cases God directly prepares both the hearer and the preacher, and in all cases cited he used preachers in this special salvation under consideration! You will find that Cornelius told his experience. Peter preached Jesus unto the hearers who had been gathered by God’s providence. After seeing the evidence that the gift of the Holy Ghost had been poured out on them, Peter commanded them to be baptized. You who read this may ask, “Does faith come by the preacher?” Paul must have surmised such question in treating upon this text for he reasons that they have not all obeyed even though the sound of gospel preaching has been literally heard by them. Then he quotes a question from Isaiah 53:1, “Who hath believed our report?” He answers by saying, “So then faith cometh by

hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Spiritual hearing does not come by the preacher but by the Word of God. God must speak to each and every individual that hears spiritually. This faith is directly imparted to His people as a gift from Him. Some phases of this faith come to a few through a preacher but not by a preacher. I have heard it said by ordained brethren, "There will be no preaching unless the preacher comes." Jesus Christ is the Preacher that was anointed for this particular work. He was ordained to preach the gospel to the poor. Unless Christ preaches through an individual there will be no preaching. Unless He preaches to an individual there will be no comfort and spiritual strength experienced. Christ is the Word. Every time you are given to hear Christ preach through His ordained ministers your faith is strengthened and your hope renewed. You are not given to thank the preacher but to thank God for the preaching that you so joyfully received. You admire the minister and thank God for him. "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things" (Romans 10:15). Have you been deeply impressed with the readiness of your pastor to come to you in times of distress when you call upon him? Have you noticed how persistently he goes among his scattered flock to administer words of comfort? Have you ever experienced a peaceful calm as you watched a minister walking toward you? When your troubled heart has been calmed as you listened to gospel preaching you have thought, "His feet were guided and directed by the providence of God that he might bring glad tidings of good things to me." You have noticed that his walk is graced with humility and meekness. You observe that his steps and actions are carefully and prayerfully taken. His feet are not swift to run into trouble and confusion but he walks beside the still waters. "Surely," you say, "God is guiding his footsteps for he walks in paths of righteousness." You listen to the words he speaks. They calm

your troubled breast and soothe your aching heart. They are words of peace that settle your confused mind. He tells you of good things, that our God reigns in providence and grace, and that Jesus saves you from all your sins. He cries that God is merciful to your unrighteousness, and is a present help in time of trouble. He preaches that it is through the merits of Christ that we have hope of heaven and immortal glory. You desire to be in complete fellowship of the saints. You are made willing to come out from among this untoward generation, follow your Lord in baptism, and be numbered with this peculiar people who trust only in the Lord. May God enable those of you who are not numbered with those who have believed with their hearts and confessed with their mouth to do so. May He give you strength and courage to "Go home (to the Church) to your friends (those who feel little but trust in God) and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for you and had compassion upon you." Tell your experience. Those of you who are numbered with the church, may God bless you to thank Him for the fellowship of your brethren. May God sanctify these meditations to your comfort and edification is my prayer.

MISCELLANEOUS LETTERS

Dear Sister Kennedy: I received your good letter and was glad to hear from you. Dessie Mae had just written you. We planned to go to meeting at Rehobeth yesterday but the buses were snowbound and we did not get to go. We have not been since last third Sunday and I am very anxious to attend again. Sister Kennedy, I will be very glad to send in your remittance to the Signs of the Times for you and I will do it as soon as I can get to it. I have been so busy lately that I have not had time for any correspondence. I like my

work very well, but I have to work night and day and then it seems I never catch up. I am teaching science, but the trouble is that when I am preparing for class I am thinking of the only true Scientist, ‘‘Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times, the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” It was He who fixed the earth, stars, sun, moon, and everything else so that all things move precisely in their predestined paths. The minds and environment of all human beings, as well as animals, are so fixed that everything, act and thought, comes into reality just as God has fixed it. He has so arranged all this so that everything works together for good to those whom God has chosen in Christ before the foundation of the earth. I am teaching arithmetic, but the trouble is that when I am preparing for the next class, I am thinking of how God enabled His little children to add to their faith, virtue, and to virtue, knowledge, etc. I think of Paul’s words that were addressed to Timothy when he said, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” I think of how that God will multiply the peace and grace of His children. I think of how He will take away their sins, and will remember no more their transgressions. I am teaching typing, but the trouble is when I am preparing for an assignment I am thinking of the types and shadows of the Old Testament. I think of the Typist who makes no typographical errors, but who reveals the true meaning of these types to his servants whom He has qualified and sent out for the purpose of making plain these things to His children. I am teaching bookkeeping, but the trouble is when I am preparing for the next class, I am thinking of a partnership of Christ, and the church where all the assets are in Christ Jesus and the liabilities are in the people but the liabilities all sink into oblivion through the proprietorship of God, the Father; Christ, the Son; the Holy Ghost; dissolved

into the church. We have no merits to list as assets. All we have are debts which were well disposed of when Jesus' obedience of the law was credited to our account. I am teaching history, but the trouble is when I am preparing for the next lesson, I am thinking of the history of the world and church. I think of Adam, the first man, of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, David, Solomon, the flood, the old covenant, the new covenant, Jesus, the great Ambassador from the Father. I am also made to meditate upon the terrible chaotic condition of this sinful, warring world. Were it not for the confidence I have in the Upholder and Disposer of all things, I feel that I would sink by the wayside. I am made to be comforted with the thought that God controls every bullet, bomb, cannon and all destroyers. He controls all generals, kings, governors and presidents, as well as, each and every soldier, marine, sailor, WAVE, WAAC, and even the hairs of the heads of each and every one who is engaged in this terrible and awful war. I believe God has a grand and noble purpose in each and every battle, and that He will take care of all His children and nothing can befall them beyond His determinate counsel. I believe God's people will be brought closer to their Maker, and be made to depend entirely upon Him for all things. I believe the nations will all be made to bow to His majesty. Now, Sister Kennedy, I realize that I have written far more than I felt that I could when I started, but I hope that you have not been too wearied reading this. I realize that it is very imperfect, but I hope you will at least forgive me for relieving my mind. It is late now, so I will let Dessie Mae finish the letter. Let me say, however, that it is always a pleasure to read a letter from you.

HOW CAN WE KNOW THE WAY?

Sitting alone this Sunday morning, sensing my infirmities so greatly, I can sympathize with Thomas when he asked Jesus, "How can we know the way?" I am convinced by sad experience as the prophet of old when he prayed, "Oh Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Just about the time I am convinced that God has granted me strength to walk in paths of righteousness, I fall by the wayside and great is the feeling of grief and condemnation when my feet slip from the way of righteous walking. It does my poor grieved heart good with so great comforting and consoling thoughts to meditate upon the answer Jesus gave Thomas. When Jesus said, "I am the way," it forever banishes sinners' hopes of saving themselves by their own goodness. Paul was possessed with a thorn in the flesh to buffet him lest he be exalted above measure. He prayed thrice for the removal of this thorn, but each time the Lord answered, "My grace is sufficient for thee." This thorn made Paul to cry out, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" He thanked God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. David's sin was ever before him and caused him to utter many expressions that only those who are grieved because of their sins understand. The sins of David kept him constantly at God's foot stool, praying to Him for mercy. The presence of a wicked heart and a wrong spirit was the stimuli that caused David to pray, "Create in me, O God, a clean heart; renew a right spirit within me." God's people are sinners but none of them are satisfied about it. Peter, no doubt, thought he was treading the way fairly well and thought he knew the way when he told Jesus that he would go with Him all the way even unto death. Peter found by sad experience that he was mistaken when he denied Jesus, cursed and swore. Jesus had told Peter prior to this, "When thou art converted, strengthen the brethren." Peter had to be converted to the fact that he had not been strengthened

sufficiently to know the way. When Peter told this sad experience to brethren, proving to them he was a sinful man as they were, it was strengthening to them. It is strengthening to me, a sinner, to hear brethren whom I esteem so highly, confessing their sins. It was strengthening to me to hear a deacon of one of our churches, whom I had deemed to be perfect in walk and conversation, confess to the brethren in church conference of having erred greatly. It was grievous to think of his experience, yet strengthening to learn that he was imperfect as well as I, and that he too, must depend upon the merits of Jesus and the mercies of God for salvation in both time and eternity.

LETTER TO ELDER BROCK'S SON

(Who is greatly handicapped as result of a car wreck.) Sam Brock W.W.R.C. Fishersville, Virginia Dear Sammy: Your letter of April 25th meant so much to us. I am glad to learn that our gracious Lord has seen fit to place you among a group that is happy regardless of handicaps. It was comforting to learn that the Lord gives you a desire to turn to the sacred writings of the Bible when you feel lonesome and depressed. I must say to you, "The Lord is the only Shepherd." Evidently God sees fit to speak to you through the Scriptures. It is wonderful that you see something new in the 23rd Psalm every time you read it. God is wonderfully blessing you by taking your mind from your own handicap and centering your thoughts upon Him and those who surround you. I trust that the Lord will bless the efforts of those who administer to you in such a manner that permanent good will be realized by your stay there. We saw something very precious in your expressions and appearance the first time we had a conversation with you. Since then we have been more deeply impressed each time we have been

with you. Even though you are yet in your "teens" God has so richly blessed you with endurance, patience, reconciliation, and many other wonderful traits of character which manifest the fruit of His Spirit. Take courage, Sammy, with the thought that God is consecrating your condition as an important tool in His, hand to manifest the gifts of His grace. When God is near, physical inactivity or pain can be no barrier. When we can feel that we are in God's hand we are not afraid of anything. When He is pleased to uphold us with His hand our troubled breast is calmed as nothing else can calm us. His love for us is so great that it enables us to lay aside every weight, putting all our cares upon Him, realizing He cares for us. You know, Sammy, God has blessed you with a father and mother whose love and prayers for you cannot be excelled in this world. He has blessed your father to so sweetly proclaim the unsearchable riches of His grace that many sad hearts have been gladdened through his preaching. His prayers have been heard and answered by the Lord many times. I trust that your letters to your father and mother have lightened their burden concerning you as your letter to us made us feel so much better. We want you to know that we are interested in. your welfare and the earnest desire of our hearts is that God will continue to bless you with His Holy Spirit. Keep us informed of your welfare and remember us when you talk to the Lord. Yours in hope of eternal life.

LETTER TO ONE BAPTIZED

Dear Sister Irene: Words sound empty and inadequate, in attempting to express to you our appreciation for your good letter and remembrances on my birthday. Unless there is such a thing as "Spiritual Telepathy" you will never know how deeply impressed both of us have been concerning you since

I had the high privilege of taking your hands in mine and leading you into the river "Jordan." The spiritual glow on your face startled me as I looked upon you before beginning the Baptismal Ceremony. It has arrested my thoughts many times since then and has made deep impressions that I shall not soon forget. Dessie Mae took two pictures of this scene, one while the ceremony was being said; another, while you were beneath the water's surface. When we get some extras made we will send you one each. You know there is a love that is so far superior to natural love that the same terms will not suffice. You plain1y stated this in your letter. I heartily agree with you. Let us distinguish the two by calling one natural love and the other, godly or spiritual love. One is selfish and the other unselfish; one is liable to be turned into hate; the other, lasting; one is sensual and the other is pure. One may possess natural love for someone and be disappointed because it is not reciprocated –godly love is always reciprocated. We love Him because He first loved us. We love each other because He has indelibly written that commandment in our hearts. What wondrous love is this! Some of God's people are especially endowed with characteristics and providentially led through circumstances so that they experience the extreme of both joy and sorrow. I am persuaded you are one of that special group. Peter, James and John witnessed the greatest sorrow in the garden of Gethsemane and the greatest joy on the mountain when Jesus was transfigured. None of the others witnessed these scenes. We cannot really enjoy the joys God blesses us with unless we have been through the sorrows Satan is permitted to put upon us. Satan can do no more than what my Father pleases. The only reason Satan is in existence is because God has a purpose in him. God is sovereign; Satan is under His direct control! Satan realizes God has control over him. He had to get permission from God to afflict Job. These affliction Job had were blessings in disguise Satan meant it for harm

but God meant it unto good. This is expressed verbatim in regard to the treatment of Joseph by his brethren. See Genesis 50:20. I am persuaded that "All things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." See Romans 8:28. God uses darkness to make light glorious; the furnace of afflictions to make the deliverance marvelous; in fact, it is good that all things have their opposite in order to prove to the children of promise that which is good and acceptable to God. We cannot understand it now, but we shall some day. Deacon Wiley Carter, Goshen, Alabama Deacon W. M. Moore, Luverne, Alabama Dear Brethren: I have enjoyed each visit that I have made into your section. I trust that I have experienced a godly love for you for the truth's sake. Your section, has been, a "garden-spot" in my experiences of sweet spiritual meditations, if not deceived The brethren and friends there have treated me so royally each time I have been there that I experienced such deep felt sense of unworthiness to visit such lovely and hospitable people. My unworthiness of your esteem causes me to shudder at the thought that I may be deceiving you. I feel sometimes that you think me to be something while I know that I am nothing. Sin is mixed with all I do and when I would do good, evil is present with me. My thoughts and actions are so absorbed with the foolish things of this world so much of the time that I fear that I am not born again. When I take inventory of myself, I must say, "If not free grace, then I am lost." May I say it this way? "If I be a child of God, if I be one of His ministers, if I have a position to fill among God's people here in this world, it is solely and completely by the grace of God I am what I am." Great interest is being manifested here. Large attentive congregations attend the churches here in their regular meetings. The grief we have in the churches is that the Lord is taking a number of the aged by death. It is sad to see the fathers and mothers in Israel,

whose counsel has been so godly, taken from us; to see their tongues and hands stilled in death! Since learning of your pastor's death I have been deeply concerned about the welfare of the churches of' his pastorate. I trust God is raising up others in your section to declare the unsearchable riches of our Christ and God's many gifts of His grace.

Mrs. R. E. Wright

3904 Greenbrier Dr. Dallas, Texas Dear Mrs. Wright: Another year is almost gone and in retrospecting the events of the year one event that stands uppermost in our minds is the Canadian Trip. We shall not soon forget your kind companionship and unselfish activities on this trip. Your conversation and actions were inspiring. Such unselfishness and regard for others as manifested in your walk and conversation is not to be found in any other than those who are so wonderfully gifted by the Spirit of God to so walk and talk. I do not write what I am writing for the purpose of praising or flattering you as I feel that you are too wise in the wisdom of God to be flattered or to accept praise. I only desire to say a word of encouragement to you and to let you know that we feel you are one of the Lord's blessed children whom He has seen fit to bless with His Spirit to be beneficial to others. Two who esteem you very highly.

Mrs. Letha A. Blackwell

9 Princeton Avenue Hopewell, New Jersey Dear Sister Blackwell and Charlotte: We have been wonderfully blessed in this section of the country with good meetings, godly zeal and interest, large attendance, and manifestation of the work of the Spirit in regenerating, convincing, convicting, and converting His little ones. We feel so unworthy of the

smilings of God's rich providence and grace that we are made to pour out our hearts of thanksgiving for His wonderful goodness to the children of men. When He manifests to us that even our trials and tribulations are blessings in disguise we feel so very guilty of our fretting and complainings. I trust that He will so lead us and direct us that we may be enabled to be content with our lot and reconciled to His will in all things. It is my desire day by day, if I know my desire, to walk and talk as His children ought. . Less than the least of all saints.

Dear Mother:

Just read your good letter. I am persuaded that you are better and not near as nervous as you were. I am judging this from your writing. I am glad that even though you are alone you do not feel to be alone but feel that God is with you to protect and provide you with His presence. I am supposing that you have the best companionship anyone can have. When you can pour your troubles out to God and He gives you the calming influence of His Holy Spirit and love you are made to rejoice in that abiding faith you have in Him. You are consoled with the fact that He will never forsake you although it may seem to you that some of your family have. I am persuaded that if you knew, the many calls we have and the many places we have to go, you could forgive us of our negligence. I know that I have not written you as I ought but please forgive me and think kindly upon us.

TO AN EDITOR Elder David V. Spangler

Box 1271 Danville, Virginia Dear Brother and Sister Spangler: I know that we cannot steer clear of controversial writings. I feel that we should earnestly contend for those

things pertaining to the doctrine and practice of the Church that we are thoroughly convinced are scripturally authorized. I feel that we should be free in expressing our convictions when we can give a scriptural reason. I do not feel that we should be silent on a subject just because there are differences of opinion among brethren but we should be extremely careful how we approach controverted subjects. I believe those who write on such subjects should preface their articles with expressions to show that it is their own conscientious convictions that they are personally convinced they are in accord with the Scriptures but realize they could be wrong and their brethren who oppose that position may be right. If the spirit of meekness is manifest all through the writings of a controverted subject, I think, it would tend to edify and cause a diligent searching of the Scriptures instead of causing confusion and strife. Only the radical minded would come fighting.

EXCERPT OF LETTER TO A VISITING MINISTER Elder W. J. Berry and family

Elon College, North Carolina Dear Brother Berry and family: We feel it was through the kindness of a merciful God that we had the grand privilege of having you good people to visit us in our little home and the churches of this vicinity. We shall treasure highly the sweet memories of our pleasant association together. Your good words of counsel, advice, and godly conversation has been an inspiration to me. Your words of comfort and encouragement came at a time when we were feeling low and despondent. I have told many people that you and I could talk longer upon the things pertaining to the welfare of Zion, experience of God’s people, and the principles of the doctrine of grace and be in strict agreement than anyone else I had ever talked with. The

manifestation of humility in your walk and conversation is outstanding. The brethren here really enjoyed your preaching. You did not come with any axe to grind nor hobby to ride. You came preaching Jesus as the basis of our hope for salvation. You came recommending a godly walk and conversation as evidence of being in a gracious state. Your preaching was seasoned with the Spirit and graced with humility. Your visit shall long be remembered. * * * * The Covenanted Baptist Church in Canada c/o Elder George Ruston, Dutton, Ontario Also, Deacon Eldon Gilbert, Talbotville, Ont. Dear Beloved Brethren: I am at loss to know why I am impressed to make this trip. I feel so unprofitable, unfit, and unworthy of the least notice of God or His children that it puzzles me greatly why that one so little and insignificant as I would be moved or impressed to take such a venture. I am encouraged with the thought that God is abundantly able, should it be His will, to strengthen us in our weakness and so grace us with His Spirit to make us fit, worthy, and profitable to mix and mingle with His people in your section. I trust that I have no selfish motive nor carnal desire to fulfill in visiting you. I pray that it be the prompting of godly love that inspires me to meet with you and hear you talk and sing of God a wonderful love and amazing grace toward poor sinners. I feel the need of being remembered by all of you in your petitions to God. Pray that He take care of us on our journey and that we be blessed with His wonderful presence and calming influence of His Spirit while we sojourn in your midst.

EXCERPT OF A LETTER TO AN INQUIRER

Dear Sister Irene: Did you know that a true analysis of the mind has to be made by a super-mind beyond the one that is being psycho-analyzed? You are your own psychiatrist only

when blessed with the super-mind which must come directly from God, referred to in the scriptures as the Spirit of God. When God adds His mind to yours you are given a new mind. As is said in the scriptures, "I will write my laws in their mind and I will put them in their heart." When this is done you are in possession of two minds, two wills, two hearts (seats of affection), two principles, and two consciences. Thus you possess a dual personality which works inter-changeably causing you to be a peculiar person. These two spirits (Spirit of God and spirit of man) making manifest two characteristics, one natural and the other spiritual, makes you cry out, "I am a stranger here below, and what I am 'tis hard to know.'' It is the Holy Ghost conscience that causes you to brand your natural conscience as inferior and changeable. It is the new heart that censures your natural heart as being selfish. It is the will of Christ imputed to you that causes you to see your unregenerate will so unable to choose the things that are right. It is the enlightened understanding that causes you to see how dark your natural understanding is. It is this super-mind shining that points out the inferiority of yourself. I am persuaded to believe that all God's people who have been born again are somewhat perturbed by what might be classed as "inferiority complexes." With Christian love and communion.

ANSWER TO A RADIO LISTENER

(Who, being interested in church history, requested a copy of a sermon delivered over radio station KDMS in El Dorado, Arkansas) Mr. F. H. Gilbert Cale High School Cale, Arkansas Dear Mr. Gilbert: I was very glad to get your letter of the 16th in regard to the address delivered from the studio of KDMS. I speak extemporaneously in such addresses and do not have a recording of this particular address. Therefore, it

is impossible to give you verbatim what was said. I think I made a few remarks that time regarding a recent trip to the first Baptist churches organized in America that still contend for the same doctrine and order of their constitution. These churches have never had a division nor deviated from their first Articles of Faith. I had the pleasure of preaching from the pulpits of Welsh Tract Church, Newark, Delaware, and Hopewell Church, Hopewell, New Jersey. Welsh Tract was constituted in Wales in 1701. The pastor and seventeen members immediately set about to come to America in a body. They continued their services while coming over and set up a place of worship on the tract given by William Penn to the Welsh. I saw the markers of the early ministers in this ancient cemetery which surrounds the present meeting house. The marker over the grave of Elisha Thomas, who died in 1730, is engraved in Old English, part in Welsh, and states that he was pastor of Welsh Tract Church and that he died in 1730. The present meeting house is an old building constructed with imported brick. The building has a patched place on each side marking entrance and exit of a cannon ball during a battle. A new history is now being prepared of this old church. (If interested write me.) As stated in beginning of this paragraph, I also spoke at Hopewell Baptist Church, Hopewell, New Jersey. This church was organized April 23, 1714. John Hart, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, was buried in this cemetery within ten yards of the present meeting house. You will see his monument there. Hopewell Church has preserved all of its minutes. I visited, Southampton Church located in Southampton, Pennsylvania. This church has records of meetings in homes in 1697, first meeting house built in 1731; present building constructed in 1772-3. The most impressive thing to me is that there has been no changes whatever in their articles of belief and mode of worship. There are no auxiliaries. There have been no changes or

additions in practice. Should space and time permit I would like to tell you of my association with brethren composing many of the old churches in that section of the country. Suffice it to say that my recent trip in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware and New Jersey was the most inspirational of any trip among Baptists I have ever taken. I would be glad to hear from you again. Sincerely yours, E. J. Lambert

Dear Friend in hope,

Words cannot express to you my appreciation for your help and encouragement on the radio program. It was as a result of a long siege of deep impressions, dreams, and wearied mind that I finally arranged to speak on Radio Station KIMP (Mt. Pleasant) each Sunday 4:30-5:00 p.m. It is my yearning desire to be enabled by God's Spirit to speak words of comfort and edification especially to those who are confined to the limits of their home; to those who are deprived of the privilege of attending church. I trust I am thankful to God that He has so wonderfully blessed me to comfort and edify God's humble poor from the pulpit; through the printed page; and over the aerial waves. Should you read some of the letters I have received from those who have read my writings in The Signs and heard me speak over the radio, I feel that you would agree with me when I say, "They would melt the hardest heart –if possible." I realize that I will be severely criticized even by some of my brethren, but I trust that I had rather do what I feel to be God's bidding than to please man. Pray that God will use me as He sees fit and sustain me with His grace to withstand criticism. Thanks again for your help in this undertaking. Yours for the truth's sake.

POEMS

The following poems were written by the author at an early age. They are included here to show some of the ideas and high ambitions entertained by the author before experiencing the trial in the "furnace of afflictions."

METAPHORICAL VISIONS IN NATURE'S PARK

When in nature's grand parks I am posing
And viewing omniferous scenes,
I just wonder if people are dozing,
Or cut off from the outside by "screens."
Singing birds often prompt me to linger
And to wonder why I have the "blues,"
When there's such a melodious singer
Who doth gather each day what he "chews."
Then I meditate upon the condition
Of the pessimistic people who live –
Hope that I can make it my mission,
"Lots of joy my fellowman to give."
As I stand by the brookside and ponder
O'er the beautiful glittering stream,
As it flows o'er the rock –not to wander
But to enter a more copious stream.
There's a thought that I grasp in the vision
That we choose the right goal in this life,
Dissuade trouble in making decision,
Persevere, not considering strife.
When we're nearing the goal we're pursuing
It is easier to progress than before,
Because, then, we are veritably viewing
That great copious stream we adore.
If we study surroundings daily,

And apply the morals we acquire
We will then be approaching life gaily
For my country I'll be a "live-wire."
Published in Southern Standard, Arkadelphia, Clark County, Arkansas

WHAT IS LIFE WITHOUT LOVE?

Is there anything I can enjoy
That will not create love in my heart?
Should there be anyone in employ
Who cannot love with the art.
I have seen people work very hard,
When each task would produce a big frown.
For their work they would have no regard,
Theft efforts will not meet with renown.
For they lack the great love for their work
That should prompt anyone in the choice,
Who intends to work and not shirk,
And in every act choose to rejoice.
It is, also, important that we Learn to love all our friends whom we meet; And to try to admire and agree
To make life very pleasant and sweet.
E'en in choosing companions for life
Burning love should be active so strong,
In the hearts of both husband and wife
That they'll smile e'en when everything's wrong.
What is Life without Love? I'll request.
And your answer will evidently be,
"It's a failure without comfort or rest,
Destitute of all joys that should be."
– February 16, 1928

SMILE AT DIFFICULTIES AND PRESS ALONG

My dear friends, if you wish to succeed.
The journey is not smooth like a song,
All the power that you have you will need
Smile at difficulties and press along.
All ambitious people have a goal,
Hardships seem to make them very strong.
Let us work with our might and be bold –
Smile at difficulties and press along.
Brace up friends, persevere with the fight
Even when everything seems wrong,